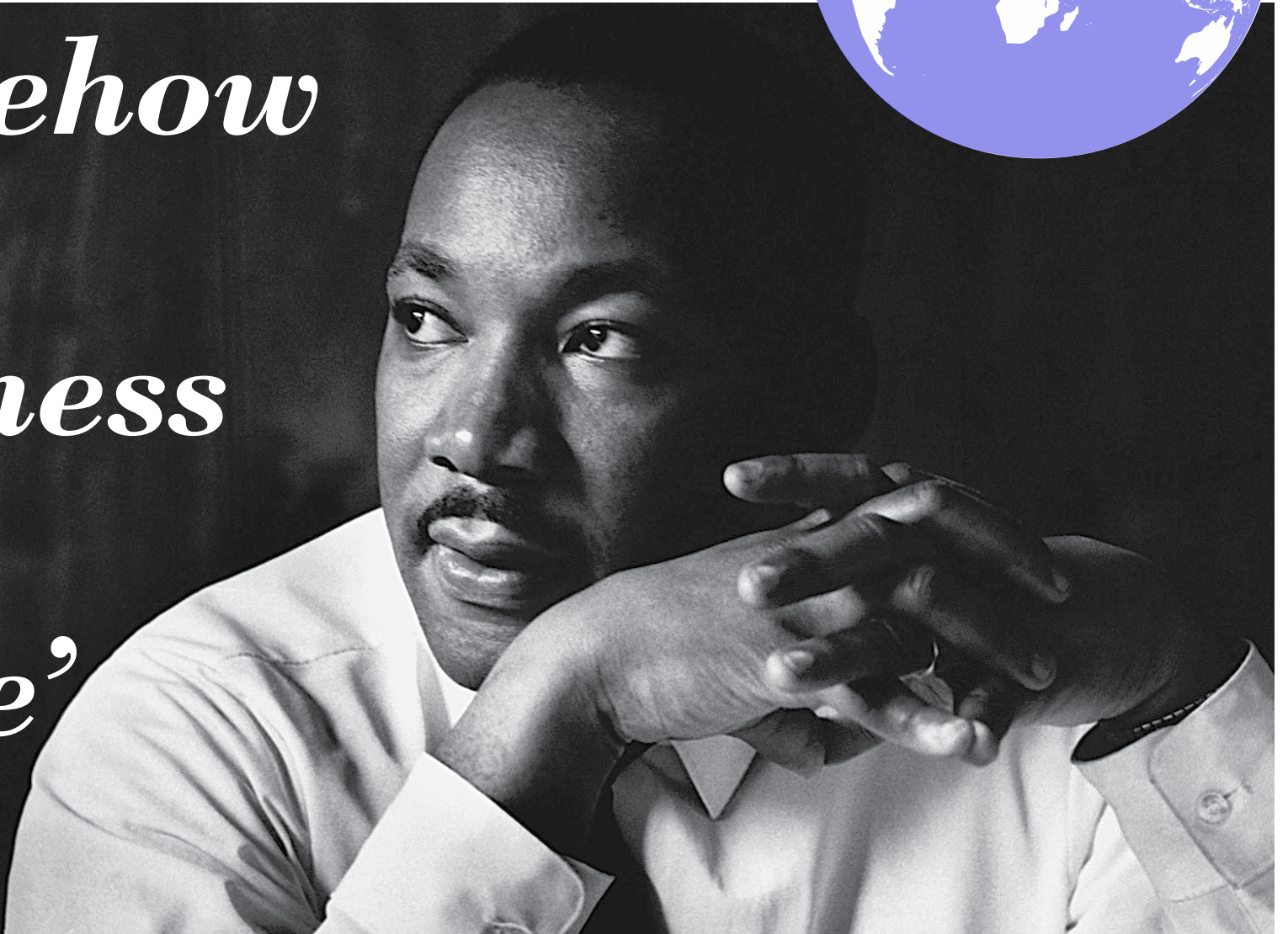


Peace & Planet News

Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster
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'Somehow This Madness Must Cease'



Martin Luther King Jr.'s April 4, 1967, Riverside Church Address, known as "Beyond Vietnam," is as profound and relevant today as it was more than a half-century ago, perhaps more so.—The Editors

I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join you in this meeting because I'm in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization which has brought us together: Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. The recent statements of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart, and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." And that time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on.



*'Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King?'
'Why are you joining the voices of dissent?' 'Peace
and civil rights don't mix,' they say.*

And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our na-

tion's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movements and pray that our

own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: "Why are you speaking about the war, Dr. King?" "Why are you joining the voices of dissent?" "Peace and civil rights don't mix," they say. "Aren't you hurting the cause of your people," they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

In the light of such tragic misunderstanding, I deem it of signal importance to try to state clearly, and I trust concisely, why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church—the church in Montgomery, Alabama, where I began my pastorate—leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

I come to this platform tonight to make
continued on page 4 ...

From the Editors

Study War No More

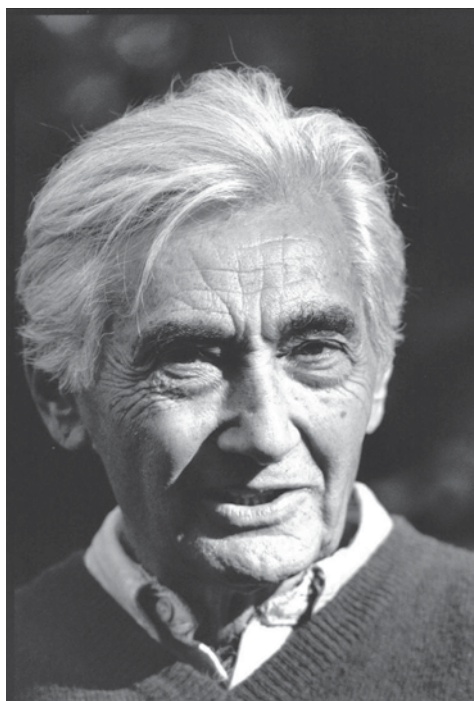
The much beloved historian and war veteran, Howard Zinn, in a speech given at the University of Wisconsin just after the first Gulf War said, “We still have that problem of just and unjust wars, of unjust wars taking place and then another war takes place which looks better, has a better rationale, is easier to defend, and so now we’re confronted with a ‘just’ war and war is made palatable again.”

Zinn, reflecting on his participation in World War II as a bombardier, also wrote: “I suppose I’ve come to the conclusion that war, by its nature, being the indiscriminate and mass killing of large numbers of people, cannot be justified for any political cause, any ideological cause, any

peace and justice reign and all wars everywhere cease.

This year could well be the one where humans either consciously choose peace and justice, or perish. It is that urgent. We must urge a global leadership gone mad to come to their senses and strive for a just and fair end to the war in Ukraine and ultimately all wars and all preparations for war. We need to come together in a spirit of cooperation, conciliation and a willingness to compromise. We must be aware of the need for security, prosperity and peace for all, not just for our own nation. There needs to be a willingness to sacrifice, not lives but ideological positions in order to insure that lives, on all sides, will be safe.

This will not happen by adding more weaponry or more soldiers on any side of the conflict. Regardless of convictions as to which side is more responsible we need to



‘... war, by its nature, being the indiscriminate and mass killing of large numbers of people, cannot be justified for any political cause, any ideological cause, any territorial boundary, any tyranny, any aggression.’—Howard Zinn

now come together in a spirit of peaceful resolution, free from this or that demand. Let all sides recognize what security concerns motivate the other and try to make sure they have it.

Leaders of countries and their citizens have to begin acting with a collective concern rather than selfish motivations. Either we continue in a spirit of love and mutual concern or we perish. It is that simple. We must stop demonising the other for perceived personal and political advantage—



or for any reason, as that only serves to separate and remove us to where lines of conflict are drawn bold in blood.

The war in Ukraine, as we all recognize, has brought us to the very brink of the ultimate disaster—nuclear war. As Martin Luther King Jr. said in 1957, “... the development and use of nuclear weapons must be banned. It cannot be denied that a full-scale nuclear war would

pacifist Albert Einstein said with rare anger, “He who joyfully marches to music in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would fully suffice. ... Heroism at command, senseless brutality, deplorable love-of-country stance, how I hate all this, how despicable and ignoble war is. ... It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is nothing but an act of murder.”

Over 50 years ago Bertrand Russell warned about the egotistical insanity of war “... all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country’s pride.” He also said, prophetically, “Either man will abolish war, or war will abolish man.” We need more than ever to see the truth in these words and take them to heart.

The military veterans who are the editors of *Peace & Planet News* are convinced that there is no such phenomena as a “good war” and that as Einstein felt, all war is murder. Another veteran, Ernest Hemingway, wrote just after WWII, “An aggressive war is the great crime against everything good in the world. A defensive war, which must necessarily turn aggressive at the earliest moment is the great counter crime. ... We never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified is not a crime. Ask the infantry and the dead.”

Perhaps Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress, said it best, “You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.”

Let’s work for peace and justice as if our lives and those of future generations depend upon it ... and they do.

—Tarak Kauff

territorial boundary, any tyranny, any aggression.”

As years of brutal warfare in Ukraine with all its suffering and death, a new year and time is upon us. It is in our most fervent wishes that this year will see sanity,

be catastrophic.”

As veterans, many who have either made the mistake or have been forced into war, we encourage active duty military personnel on all sides to refuse to participate in the horror of war. We recognize that it takes great courage to resist the herd mentality and that enormous pressure is put upon young people, as countries take pains to glorify the warrior and justify wars—flag waving, military flyovers at sporting events, support the troops mentality (even as they come home in body bags or grievously wounded.)

“Wars will be stopped only when soldiers refuse to fight, when workers refuse to load weapons onto ships and aircraft, when people boycott the economic outposts of Empire that are strung across the globe.”—Arundhati Roy

We need to close our ears to the insane martial voices of war as trumpeted by politicians, the weapons industry and a subservient media and open our hearts and minds to the prophets of peace.

The brilliant scientist, philosopher and

Kristallnacht Revisited

Snug we will be tucked away in our little technoghettoes for the night when the mushroom clouds begin their march up the coast

and then how we will cover in our corners until the firestorm pounds down our doors

By Doug Rawlings

until we are torn loose by the black leather gloves of our calculated ignorance

until we are thrust headlong into the blast furnace exploding down the street

where the corner store used to be

* Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass, also called the November pogrom(s), was a pogrom against Jews carried out by the Nazi Party’s Sturmabteilung paramilitary forces along with civilians throughout Nazi Germany on 9–10 November 1938. The German authorities looked on without intervening. The name Kristallnacht comes from the shards of broken glass that littered the streets after the windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings and synagogues were smashed.

Peace & Planet News

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Marching and Attending Rallies Without End?

By Mike Ferner

In most respects I agree with Einstein's statement, quoted in the editorial on the opposite page, "He who joyfully marches to music in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would fully suffice. ... Heroism at command, senseless brutality, deplorable love-of-country stance, how I hate all this, how despicable and ignoble war is. It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is nothing but an act of murder."

However, getting down to actual cases, I reflect on being a high school student during the height of the American war in Vietnam, raised in a traditional, Catholic community where authority was rarely challenged and "Thou shalt not kill" never applied to Dirty Commies Who Never Fight Fair. As VFP member and retired Special Forces soldier Stan Goff said so perceptively, "I had a head full of John Wayne movies" when I enlisted right after graduation in 1969.

Were Albert Einstein still around, I would ask him to consider: that's when the "System" is so effective at getting young people to go to war. It's why the draft age is 18; why military recruiters are all over high school career days; why the Pentagon spends billions on everything from flyovers at pro sports games to Junior ROTC programs for 14-year-olds.

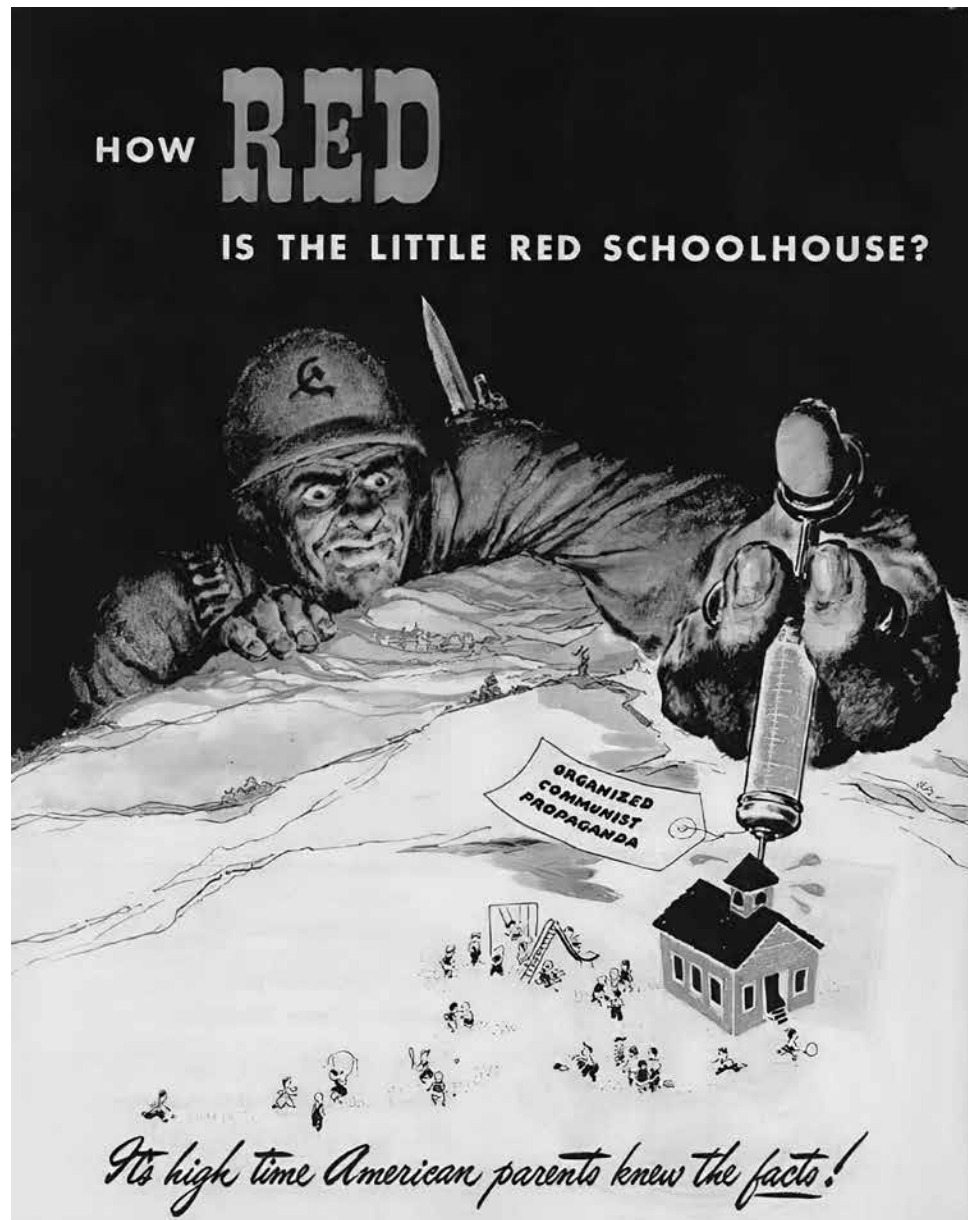
Coming out of the soybean fields of rural Ohio, I didn't believe there even was a "System." Much later, after reading Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* I started to see how it worked, as powerfully as the man behind the curtain in the Wizard of Oz ... until Toto pulled the curtain aside.

Much like the last thing a fish notices is water, we are awash in a culture that reinforces society's illusions of freedom; that conceals who really is running the show; that builds a democracy theme park we can call home.

That's why, as much as I agree it would be good to "urge a global leadership gone mad to come to their senses and strive for

Much like the last thing a fish notices is water, we are awash in a culture that reinforces society's illusions of freedom; that conceals who really is running the show; that builds a democracy theme park we can call home.

a just and fair end to the war in Ukraine and ultimately all wars and all preparations for war," I'm compelled to argue that leadership, given the system we have, is incapable of ever doing so. They and their corporate sponsors are the few who actually benefit from the system as it's made to function. The frightening thing of course, is that life on Earth may not have time for the cultural changes needed



Anti-communist propoganda issued in the United States during the 1950s.

to replace what now runs the show with a system—a whole system—meaning education, work, food, transportation, media and the rest of what we swim in, that functions by truly democratic values, not corporate rule for the benefit of an elite.

So what does this democracy business actually mean?

Surely more than voting every few years. That is the most minimal form of civic participation and it means less and less as time goes by. There are those who even say (gasp) that if it really meant anything it would be outlawed.

One part of the reason why is simple:

to the ultimate of all rights and we've allowed corporations to usurp it for their benefit, perverting the concept far beyond human beings exchanging views. Subsequently it applies to every corporate agent on every payroll whose job it is to lobby elected officials. Combined that with reformist zeal to limit terms and where does that leave government's institutional memory? With the lobbyists, because they are the agents of undying, omnipresent institutions which we've invested with the right of free speech. What could possibly go wrong there?

Similar arguments can be made for every constitutional amendment in the Bill of Rights. That document, appropriately, was intended to limit the power of government to abuse citizens in various ways. That's why it prevents government from establishing religion; guarantees free assembly and speech; limits government ability to lock up people or seize their property without due process, etc. etc. But none of those amendments say a word about restricting private power.

Private power in the form of corporations was well known when the constitution was written. That's why corporations were restrictively chartered by states, strictly limited in capitalization, limited in length, limited in purpose and eliminated altogether if they went out of bounds, which was not a rare occurrence for well over the first 100 years of the republic.

But it was a mighty struggle from the first and people were disadvantaged from

the very first when only 10% were legally considered persons with the right to run the show. Let the math also show that millions of those in that 90%, those who were held in slavery, had zero rights but were counted in the census as 60% of a person so slave states could maintain their political power in Congress and the Electoral College.

Howard Zinn and others do a good job of describing how that stacked deck affected the outcome of ensuing battles over rights to property, education, voting and life itself. The first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and founding father, John Jay, summed it up as succinctly and truthfully as anyone ever did: "Those who own the country ought to govern it."

The history of how people struggled against that stacked deck is exciting, inspiring, infuriating by turns, but it's hardly well known, and that is by no means an oversight. Making room to tell the story of how courts and legislatures reinforced the subservience of private capital to the public good is just too damn dangerous.

As advanced as we may think we are, we are still bounded and run by the same primitive strictures as medieval society—obedience to elite authority civil and religious, competition and striving for individual success, lack of an understanding that there are such realities as a working class and a ruling class with very different interests. Until we sort out this massive inequity and gross imbalance of power between the wealthy elite and the working class, we will, as King so wisely observed in his most indispensable speech, "Beyond Vietnam,"

"The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing Clergy and Laymen Concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies with-

As advanced as we may think we are, we are still bounded and run by the same primitive strictures as medieval society.

out end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy."

Mike Ferner served as a Navy hospital corpsman during the American War in Vietnam. He is a past president of Veterans For Peace and is the senior editor of Peace & Planet News. He is the author of *Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran for Peace Reports from Iraq*.

Riverside Address

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a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia. Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they must play in the successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reasons to be suspicious of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides.

Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, but rather to my fellow Americans.

Since I am a preacher by calling, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated, as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to



An African American soldier during the Vietnam War looks at a wall monument built by the Viet Cong that reads: 'U.S. Negro Armymen, you are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK is perpetrating against your family at home.'

draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps a more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been

crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. And so we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. And so we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years—especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they ask—and rightly so—what about Vietnam? They ask if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In

1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself until the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

*O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!*

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read: Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that America will be—are—are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1954; and I cannot forget that the Nobel Peace Prize was also a commission, a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for "the brotherhood of man." This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances, but even if it were not present I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I'm speaking against the war.

[I]t became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions.



Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men—for Communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the One who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the Vietcong or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this One? Can I threaten them with death or must I

to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination and a government that had been established not by China—for whom the Vietnamese have no great love—but by clearly indigenous forces that included some communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important

landlords, and refused even to discuss reunification with the North. The peasants watched as all this was presided over by United States' influence and then by increasing numbers of United States troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictators seemed to offer no real change, especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America, as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept, and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received the regular promises of peace and democracy and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us, not their fellow Vietnamese, the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs.

So they go, primarily women and chil-

without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing—in the crushing of the nation's only non-Communist revolutionary political force, the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.

Now there is little left to build on, save bitterness. Soon, the only solid—solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call “fortified hamlets.” The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these. Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These, too, are our brothers.

Perhaps a more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation Front, that strangely anonymous group we call “VC” or “communists”? What must they think of the United States of America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem, which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the South? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of “aggression from the North” as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely

As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. ... But they ask—and rightly so—what about Vietnam?

not share with them my life?

And finally, as I try to explain for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood, and because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned especially for his suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them.

This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation and for those it calls “enemy,” for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion, my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the ideologies of the Liberation Front, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1954—in 1945 rather—after a combined French and Japanese occupation and before the communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony. Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not ready for independence, and we again fell victim

needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abor-



Ho Chi Minh with Vietnamese children.

ative effort to recolonize Vietnam. Before the end of the war we were meeting 80% of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of their reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at recolonization.

After the French were defeated, it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva Agreement. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators, our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly rooted out all opposition, supported their extortionist

dren and the aged. They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least 20

I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government.

casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless,

we must understand their feelings, even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we

continued on next page ...



Riverside Address

... continued from previous page

must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than 25% communist, and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam, and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will not have a part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them, the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation planning to build on political myth again, and then shore it up upon the power of new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western words, and especially their distrust of American

intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French Commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which could have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again. When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted.

Also, it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreement concerning foreign troops. They remind us that they did not begin to send troops in large numbers and even supplies into the South until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the president claimed that none ex-

isted when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the North. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor, weak nation more than eight hundred—rather, eight thousand miles away from its shores.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called “enemy,” I am as deeply

concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of

the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak of the—for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words, and I quote:

“Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.”

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.

I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do [immediately] to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

Number one: End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.

Number two: Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.

Three: Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.

Four: Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and any future Vietnam government.

Five: Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

Part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asy-

lum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the Liberation Front. Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country, if necessary. Meanwhile, we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices and our lives if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative method of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service, we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. I am pleased to say that this is a path now chosen by more than seventy students at my own alma mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. Moreover, I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.

Now there is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter that struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing.

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing "clergy and laymen concerned" committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end, unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy.

And so, such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957, a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years, we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which has now justified the presence of U.S. military advisors in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Cambodia and why American napalm and Green Beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru.

It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of



overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand, we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beg-

gars needs restructuring.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and, through their misguided passions, urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not engage in a negative anticommunism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, in-

continued on next page ...





'I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube.'

Riverside Address

... continued from previous page

security, and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wounds of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions.

It is a sad fact that because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch antirevolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has a revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions that we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores, and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing—embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some

sentimental and weak response. I am not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This

In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected .

Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate—ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: "Let us love one another, for love is God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day.

We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of re-

taliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. And history is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says:

"Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word."

We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in the affairs of men does not remain at flood—it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words,

"Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on."

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shame-

ful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message—of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

As that noble bard of yesterday, James Russell Lowell, eloquently stated:

"Once to every man and nation comes a moment to decide,

"In the strife of truth and Falsehood, for the good or evil side;

"Some great cause, God's new Messiah offering each the bloom or blight,

"And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

"Though the cause of evil prosper, yet 'tis truth alone is strong

"Though her portions be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong

"Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown

"Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

And if we will only make the right choice, we will be able to transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of peace. If we will make the right choice, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our world into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. If we will but make the right choice, we will be able to speed up the day, all over America and all over the world, when "justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."



A History of Non-Violence

By Doug Rawlings

I have used Alice and Staughton Lynd's *A History of Non-Violence in America* during the past decade while teaching a Peace Studies course for first-year students at our state university. The course focused on non-violent direct action, how it has been applied, and how it can be used in our country.

The Lynds' text includes Martin Luther King's "Letter From The Birmingham Jail" and Howard Zinn's "Just and Unjust Wars." We also studied a multitude of other essays, including King's "Riverside Church Address" (reprinted in this paper). The good news is that King's and Zinn's words resonate powerfully with our latest generation of college students.

When appropriate, I also used my own personal experience as a Vietnam veteran and peace activist to provide context for King's and Zinn's narratives. Drafted in 1968, I was sent off to war. I was not aware of King's powerful words from the pulpit of the Riverside Church. If I had been, I wonder how I would have responded to my draft notice. Would I have sought conscientious objector's status, as he implored us to do?

But, more important, I wonder why I was not made aware of King's speech. Who's responsible for disseminating powerful speeches like this? High school teachers? College teachers? In that spirit, I ask my students what they might do if Congress brings the Selective Service back and includes women in the draft? What should students do to prepare for that possibility? And what responsibilities must we, as a nation, bear after our wars end? And what about reparations for the Vietnamese people? For the Ukrainian people? These questions and more are addressed in our classroom, based in good part on Dr. King's eloquent and compassionate address. His legacy carries on through our willingness to step forward and bring him into the lives of those who were not even born when King was assassinated.

Also, I am not hesitant to offer my own observations as the students and I apply King's and Zinn's often prophetic words from the past to the present and further into the future. For example, in Zinn's talk, given as the wars

in the Middle East were heating up, he provides us with an outline of how our government cranks up the war machine to sell the current war to prospective soldiers and then to their grieving families. Do these words from the

Just War Theory, a "just war" needs a "just cause." This is where Zinn brings in his own past. He volunteered for World War II for a just cause—to fight fascism. All well and good. But then Zinn witnesses us becoming the beasts we were supposedly fighting against—the fire bombings of Dresden and of Tokyo; the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and his own personal involvement in "testing" this new bomb—napalm—on a French



Staughton Lynd walking the talk.

1990s apply to today's war in Ukraine? You bet they do. For example, here are the seven elements of "persuasion" that Zinn says our government employed during the Iraq War. I think they are still relevant today.

1. The starting point is that the United States is "a good society." Our existence is based on our resilience founded on the goodness of our intentions. We are exceptional. We only want to help. Therefore, our government only does good.

2. The government makes a "moral appeal" to its citizens dependent upon these citizens' capability to "forget" our past wars: the mass media and the administration must "obliterate history" or at least not bring it up. Wounded Knee? Whose? The Gulf of Tonkin incident? Huh? Weapons of mass destruction that weren't? Babies yanked out of incubators? Say what? What's a "red flag" anyways? I dunno. Good. Keep it that way.

3. Next a "Manichean situation" has to be created that simply and firmly identifies the good and the evil. Noriega evil. Hussein evil. Putin evil. Sure, all governments have their bad elements, but these guys are the devil incarnate. They must be destroyed at all costs.

4. Ready? Okay. Here we go. The troops are sent in, and, if, by God, you are opposed to the war, then you are obviously not supporting the troops. American troops are massing on the Polish border to Ukraine. Missile bases will be set up in Ukraine that must be protected by American troops. Inevitably, a few will be killed and wounded. We can't let that stand without getting our revenge. Hey, wasn't that what happened in Viet Nam? Shut up. This is different.

5. Now the government "wages a war" against its own people through often blatant disinformation campaigns. "The light is at the end of the tunnel." We are winning. Our allies are winning. Trust us. Would we lie to you? We just need more weapons, more troops, more, more.

6. But what if people demand a philosophical justification for the war? Okay, in the spirit of St. Augustine's

village. He writes: "Just causes can lead you to think that everything you then do is just. ... Tyrannies, aggressions, injustices, of course they have to be dealt with. No appeasement. They give us a choice: appeasement or war. Come on! You mean to say between appeasement and war there aren't a thousand other possibilities? Is human ingenuity so defunct, is our intelligence so lacking that we cannot devise ways of dealing with tyranny and injustice without killing huge numbers of people?" I love this guy. I just look at the students in our class and read that statement to them. Ukraine, anybody?

7. Finally, Zinn echoes Jane Addams when she warned Americans about entering into World War I, pointing out that the government will play upon people's inherent need to belong to a group, a community. Even if it's based on mass killing. Zinn asks: "What better way to get national unity than around a war?" Indeed. Think of Zelensky's recent visit to our nation's capital. Let's gather around the flag. Forget about our failings here at home with poverty, veterans sleeping on cold streets, health and education and infrastructure. Let's all get on the Pentagon's bandwagon. Moral autonomy be damned.

King and Zinn, Jane Addams, Emma Goldman, Dorothy Day, Barbara Demings, and many others that the Lynds feature in their anthology live on in our lives. The students read and study them. Now, we can bring them to the barricades once again to light the way forward. By featuring the powerful testimony of Dr. King in this issue of *Peace & Planet News* we are making our own modest contribution to that goal. Read his speech again. Put it into the hands of today's young people. And let's then join them in the crusade to win back this planet from the militarists and their lackeys.

¡Dr. King and Howard Zinn Presente!

Doug Rawlings is a cofounder and past poet laureate and vice president of Veterans For Peace. He is a contributing editor and cofounder of Peace & Planet News. He lives in Chesterville, Maine.

At Smedley Butler's Grave

By W.D. Ehrhart

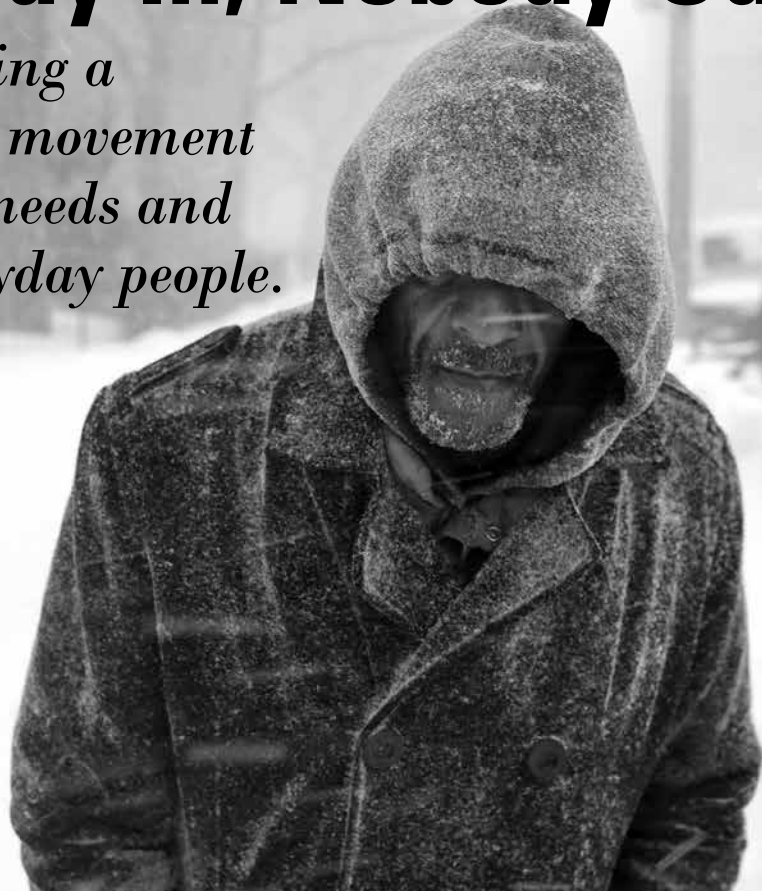
Oaklands Cemetery
West Chester, PA

So here I am with Smedley Butler, major general, Maverick Marine, Old Gimlet Eye, the Stormy Petrel, two-time Medal of Honor winner; me a sergeant with a Purple Heart for doing nothing but getting hit. (Don't kid yourself, there's nothing heroic in that; just bad luck.)

Yet here I am at Butler's grave. But why? Well, we were both Marines, there's that. And he graduated in 1898 from the school where I taught decades later for 18 years. And he wrote a book called *War Is a Racket* in which he concluded, "To Hell with War!" How can you not love the guy for that?

Everybody In, Nobody Out

Imagine building a pro-democracy movement attuned to the needs and dreams of everyday people.



By Liz Theoharis

Earlier this month, I was in Washington, D.C.'s Union Station. The weather had turned cold and I couldn't help noticing what an inhospitable place it had become for the city's homeless and dispossessed.

Once upon a time, anyone was allowed to be in the train station at any hour. Now, there were signs everywhere announcing that you needed a ticket to be there. Other warning signs indicated that you could only sit for 30 minutes at a time at the food-court tables, while barriers had been placed where benches used to be to make it that much harder to congregate, no less sit down.

With winter descending on the capital, all this struck me as particularly cruel when it came to those unfortunate enough to be unhoused. That sense of cruelty was heightened by the knowledge that legions of policymakers, politicians, and lobbyists—with the power to pass legislation that could curtail evictions, protect tenants, and expand affordable housing—travel through Union Station regularly.

When I left D.C., I headed for my hometown, New York City, where Penn Station has been made similarly unwelcoming to the homeless. Entrances are closed; police are everywhere; and the new Moynihan terminal, modern and gleaming, was designed without public seating to ward off unwanted visitors.

Worse yet, after a summer spent destroying homeless encampments and cutting funding for homeless services, New York Mayor Eric Adams recently announced that the city would soon begin involuntarily institutionalizing homeless people.

Rather than address a growing mental health crisis among the most marginalized in his city with expanded resources and far greater access to healthcare, housing,

and other services, Adams has chosen the path of further punishment for the poor.

It's a bitter wonder that our political capital and our financial capital have taken such a hard line on homelessness and poverty in the richest country on the planet.

And this is happening in a nation in which 8 to 10 million people lack a home

**Jesus, in other words,
was born homeless and
undocumented in the
land of empire.**

entirely or live on the brink; a nation that reached record-high rents this year (with three-quarters of our largest cities experiencing double-digit growth in prices); that spends more on healthcare with generally worse outcomes than any other advanced economy; and that continues to chisel away at public housing, privatize healthcare, and close hospitals, while real-estate agencies, financial speculators, and pharmaceutical companies enrich themselves in striking ways.

Walking around Union Station, I also couldn't help thinking about the administration's decision to end the recent rail strike by stripping workers of their right to collective bargaining and denying them more than a day of paid sick leave a year. The president claimed that breaking the strike was necessary to protect the economy from disaster.

Yet little attention was given to the sky-high profits of the railroad companies, which doubled during the pandemic. The price tag for more paid sick leave for union workers was estimated at about \$321 million annually. Compare that to the \$7 billion railroad companies made during the

90 days they opposed the strike and the more than \$200 million rail CEOs raked in last year.

In the shadow of such figures, how could paid sick leave during an ongoing pandemic be anything but a basic necessity for front-line workers?

The Deeper Meaning of Democracy

All of this left me thinking about the ongoing debate over American democracy, not to mention the recent Georgia runoff where Sen. Raphael Warnock, even as he celebrated his victory over Herschel Walker, pointed to the negative impact of voter suppression on the election.

Today, the rise in outright authoritarianism and white Christian nationalism in our body politic poses a genuine danger to the future health and well-being of our society. At the same time, a revived pro-democracy movement has begun to emerge, committed to fighting for free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the peaceful transfer of power. But let's be honest: if we stop there, we cheapen the noble urge for a truly decent democracy.

It's precisely when our governing ideals are under ever more intense attack that you should ask what we mean by invoking democracy. Do we mean an electoral system shaped by the will of the majority? If so, given growing voter suppression tactics (and big money in politics), our system is already a far cry from any democratic ideal. Or do we mean more? In fact, shouldn't democracy mean more?

For me, a democratic society means that everyone, including the poor, has a say in how our lives are lived and workplaces organized. It's a society in which the homeless aren't criminalized, the health of workers is protected, and people are treated with dignity by a government of their choice.

And I truly believe that, when you strip away the partisan rhetoric and political spin, this is a vision shared by a majority of Americans.

In response to Mayor Adams' encampment sweeps this summer, one homeless man interviewed by *The Guardian* offered this explanation: "Fascism works like that—as soon as there's a tightening of the belt or any sort of shift into harder times, that fascist and oppressive elements within countries will immediately try to attack the most vulnerable."

So how do we fight such an emboldened threat and the dangers faced by those at greatest risk among us?

I certainly don't have the full answers to such questions, but a partial solution, I suspect, lies in building a pro-democracy movement attuned not just to elections (and the legal fights that, these days, regularly go with them in Congress and state legislatures), but to the needs and dreams of everyday people.

That would require a willingness to reach into communities that have all too often been forgotten or abandoned and earnestly follow the leadership of the people who live there.

Permanently Organizing the Unorganized

At this time of year, some communities celebrate Las Posadas, re-enacting Jesus's birth in the humble city of Bethlehem. Though many of us have been taught to imagine that birth as a moment of tranquility, there is, in fact, great hardship and conflict at the heart of the nativity scene.

Indeed, Jesus was born in a time of tremendous violence and injustice. In the days leading up to his birth, a militarized police force had pushed migrant people back to their lands of origin so that the au-



**New York City Mayor
Eric Adams has chosen
the path of further
punishment for the poor.**

thorities could demand taxes and tributes.

The local ruler had sent out spies to ensure that his authority wasn't challenged and, lest anyone dare to do so, had ordered thousands of young Jewish boys murdered. Amid that swirl of state-sanctioned violence, Mary and Joseph were driven from their home, forcing Mary to give birth in a small, dirty manger.

Jesus, in other words, was born homeless and undocumented in the land of empire.

During Las Posadas, communities from the Bronx to Los Angeles retell that story, highlighting the gentrification of neighborhoods that's pricing out the poor, unjust immigration policies that are unfairly separating families, and a housing crisis that's left millions in need of—dare I use the word?—stable living quarters during the holidays.

Included in the social critique that lurks behind Las Posadas is the belief that everyday people should have the right to determine the course of their own lives, rather than be pawns in the machinations of the wealthy and powerful.



Fernando Garcia, director of the Border Network for Human Rights.

In Texas and New Mexico, the Border Network for Human Rights celebrates Christmas among the thousands of families it's been working with for the past 20 years. Fernando Garcia, its director, has taught me much about organizing among the poor and dispossessed, offering a vision of "permanently organized communities."

At the heart of the Border Network's vision is the idea of organizing an enduring network of connected families living in that part of our country. As for its focus, as Garcia explains it, "Whatever issue they feel that they need to tackle is the priority."

Building durable and lasting organized communities, especially among those most impacted by injustice, is something a pro-democracy movement should take seriously indeed. In fact, it's one place where, all too sadly, we lag behind the forces of authoritarianism and white Christian nationalism.

In many poor communities, politicized reactionary churches and para-church organizations are already well practiced in providing not just political and theological messaging and training, but material aid and a sense of belonging to hurting people. Those concerned with justice and inclusion would do well to follow suit.

In the coming years, movements dedicated to democracy and our economic flourishing need to invest time and resources in building permanently organized communities to help meet the daily

needs of impacted Americans, while offering a sense of what democracy looks like in practice, up close and personal.

As the threat of yet more political turmoil and escalating violence looms, isn't it time to break through the isolation that so many people feel with a new sense of collective power? Which brings me to a larger point: in order to build a pro-democracy movement capable of contending with the influence of authoritarianism and bad theology, we need to leave progressive bubbles and silos and commit ourselves to organizing the unorganized—and following their lead.

The newly launched Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW) offers a helpful

template. The USSW emerged from the Fight for \$15 movement and a long history of Southern organizing. Calling for "community unionism," it intends to link labor struggles to community life, while supporting workers as they fight for justice.

Awakening the Sleeping Giant

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began spreading across the fissures of racism and poverty in our society, not to speak of the current crisis of inflation and impending recession, there were already 140 million Americans who were either poor or a \$400 emergency away from poverty.

Those numbers have only grown. Some poor people are already politically active, but many aren't—not because the poor don't care but because politics-as-usual doesn't speak to the daily stresses of their lives.

There is, in other words, a sleeping giant out there that, when awakened, could shift the political and moral calculus of the nation. Were that mass of poor, impacted people to begin to believe that democracy could mean something real and positive in their lives, watch out.

Should that happen—and, as Frederick Douglass once said, "those who would be free themselves must strike the first blow"—you could end up with a pro-democracy movement that would be unstoppable.

Almost five years ago, I helped launch the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival alongside Bishop

William J. Barber II, president of Repairers of the Breach, as well as my colleagues at the Kairos Center, and thousands of directly impacted people, community organizers, and religious leaders.

Our core theory of change, drawn from our study of history, is that the most transformative movements in our national storybook have always relied on generations of poor, deeply impacted people coming together to help lead a national change for the better.

Part of our analysis is that poor people nationwide could become a transformative voting bloc if only politics were more relevant in their lives.

In 2021, the Poor People's Campaign released a report on the impact of poor voters in the 2020 elections. It showed that, contrary to popular belief, poor and low-income people made up a remarkably sizable percentage of the electorate (and,

them claim, this country can indeed afford such widely popular and deeply needed ballot measures and policies.

In fact, as Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz wrote in his award-winning *The Price of Inequality*, the question is not whether we can afford housing, healthcare, paid sick leave, living wages, immigrant rights, and more; it's whether we can afford not to—especially since failing to address the people's needs weakens our democracy.

In fact, right before the midterms and the beginning of the holiday season, retired professor of humanities Jack Metzgar wrote at *Inequality.org*:

"Because the wealth of the wealthy confers both economic and political power, we cannot adequately defend democracy if we go on allowing our economic oligarchy a completely free lunch. ... Next time you hear a politician say 'we' can't afford

At the heart of the Border Network's vision is the idea of organizing an enduring network of connected families living in that part of our country.

surprisingly enough, an even larger percentage in battleground states).

Looking at racial demographics among such voters, the report found that turnout was significant, whatever their race. Given the total vote share for Joe Biden and down-ballot Democrats that year, the data even challenged the notion that poor white voters were a crucial part of Donald Trump's base.

Today, our electoral system has become gridlocked and increasingly gerrymandered to empower minoritarian rule at the expense of the will of the majority. Thanks to that, it can often feel as if the country is evenly split on issues ranging from healthcare, housing, and jobs to abortion and environmental protection.

But non-partisan polls continue to reaffirm that the majority of the country supports more economic, racial, and gender justice. Results from ballot measures in the midterm elections reflect a similar reality, whether it was people in various states voting to protect the right to abortion, passing higher minimum wage laws, or expanding Medicaid.

And contrary to what too many of our politicians and the media that support

something that clearly needs doing, just stop a moment and think—about what a wealth tax on a very small proportion of Americans could accomplish."

Indeed, it can be done! ¡Si, se puede! After all, isn't this the true story of Christmas?

So, this season, when you listen to Handel's *Messiah*, attend to the words about lifting from the bottom up: "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain."

As 2022 comes to a close, this is where I draw hope and inspiration.

This article was originally published by TomDispatch.com.

Liz Theoharis, a TomDispatch regular, is a theologian, ordained minister, and anti-poverty activist. Cochair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival and director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, she is the author of Always With Us? What Jesus Really Said About the Poor and We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign. Follow her on Twitter at @liztheo.



Rally in Baltimore backs railroad workers.

The Plight of the North Atlantic Right Whale



By Russell Wray

The North Atlantic Right Whale may have just been fast-tracked irreversibly towards extinction. And it matters.

Whales, those creatures from the ocean realm, amazing in the sheer awesome size of their immense bodies, their incredible beauty, the complexity of their various vocalizations and cultures, with the secrets and mystery they carry, have captivated the imaginations and hearts of many. It is good knowing they are here on this Earth.

But, to put it mildly, humans have not always treated them kindly over the centuries, and still to this day. We need to rethink what we are doing to whales, not only for the sake of the whales, but for all, including humanity.

Whales, both living, and after death, benefit us in many ways. As a keystone species, whales play a vitally important role in our global ecosystem. Several studies, including a 2019 report titled “Nature’s Solution to Climate Change,” show that whales play an important role in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Industrial whaling is estimated to have reduced the biomass of great whales by 81%. These studies suggest that if their populations were allowed to recover to their pre-whaling numbers, whales could play a hugely positive role in dealing with the climate emergency we are faced with.

So aside from all the beauty, inspiration, and mystery they provide us with, there are other really good reasons for humanity to take seriously the need to recover whale populations. But we are not doing a very good job of it.

The North Atlantic Right Whale

Things have been looking pretty bleak for this whale in recent years. The species has seen an alarming decline in its numbers; It once numbered in the tens of thousands, but the most recent estimate is that there are only 340 left on the planet, and they are being injured and killed by humans far faster than they can reproduce.

North Atlantic Right Whales, one of Earth’s most critically endangered large whales, have never been given an opportunity to recover from whaling. They were considered the “right” whale to kill and

were almost totally wiped out. Right (and other) Whales keep on being injured and killed from vessel strikes and entanglements in fishing gear. Entanglements are the leading cause of death in Right Whales.

What happens when a whale is entangled in fishing gear? The whale may drown if it is not able to reach the surface to breathe. If the whale is able to break away, it may still carry what gear it remains entangled in for months and in some cases, years, exhausting the whale’s energy, reducing its ability to grow and reproduce, and making it more susceptible to disease, predation, vessel strikes, and additional entanglements. The gear often tightens as a whale struggles to

sible for protecting marine species, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) doesn’t. It has done a remarkably poor job of fulfilling its responsibility when it comes to Right Whales, only moving to protect these whales when forced to by litigation from environmental groups, and the protections offered were always too little, too late. In his 2017 book, now-retired U.S. Marine Mammal Commission policy analyst David Laist wrote that it “seemed more intent on ensuring no fishing opportunity would be lost than on protecting whales.” The agency’s failure to protect Right Whales has been continuing for decades now, one of the main reasons Right Whales are at the

Earth’s most critically endangered large whales, have never been given an opportunity to recover from whaling. They were considered the ‘right’ whale to kill and were almost totally wiped out.

free itself, cutting through flesh and bone, causing infections and sometimes severing flippers or flukes. If gear is wrapped around and through the mouth, the whale may lose the ability to feed, eventually starving to death.

Entanglements entail immense pain and suffering for the whales who are unfortunate enough to experience it. Amy Knowlton, a senior scientist at the New England aquarium who has been studying Right Whales for nearly 40 years, says, “It is a heartbreaking sight to see as they often are under significant stress, frantically thrashing and desperately trying to shake the gear off their bodies.”

Michael J. Moore, a veterinary scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution writes in his book *We Are All Whalers*, “As a scientist, I know that it is beyond urgent that we introduce much more widespread measures to mitigate large whale trauma caused by vessels and fishing gear. As a veterinarian, I see the often long, drawn-out trauma to individual Right Whales caused by ropes from fishing gear as utterly unacceptable. Do we all have the individual and political will to make it right?”

Unfortunately, the federal agency respon-

sible for protecting marine species, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) doesn’t.

In 2021, following years of litigation (ongoing today), NMFS finally came out with new regulations to reduce entanglement-caused injuries and deaths of Right Whales. However, last July, the federal judge rightly ruled that those regulations very clearly had seriously violated both the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) in that they would still not adequately protect Right Whales. This past November he gave NMFS two years to

come up with a new set of regulations that would actually meet the requirements of the MMPA and ESA and give Right Whales a genuine chance of avoiding extinction.

Following the court’s decision, lobster lost its “sustainable” certification from several prominent sustainable-seafood guides, further enraging the industry and Maine politicians, including Maine’s entire congressional delegation and governor. To say this issue is on fire is an understatement.

Needless to say, this has been a highly contentious issue in some places ... particularly in the state of Maine. The Northeast lobster fishery accounts for 93% of U.S. buoy lines in Right Whale habitat, with the greatest density in waters off the Maine coast. It is these vertical lines which entangle right (and other) whales.

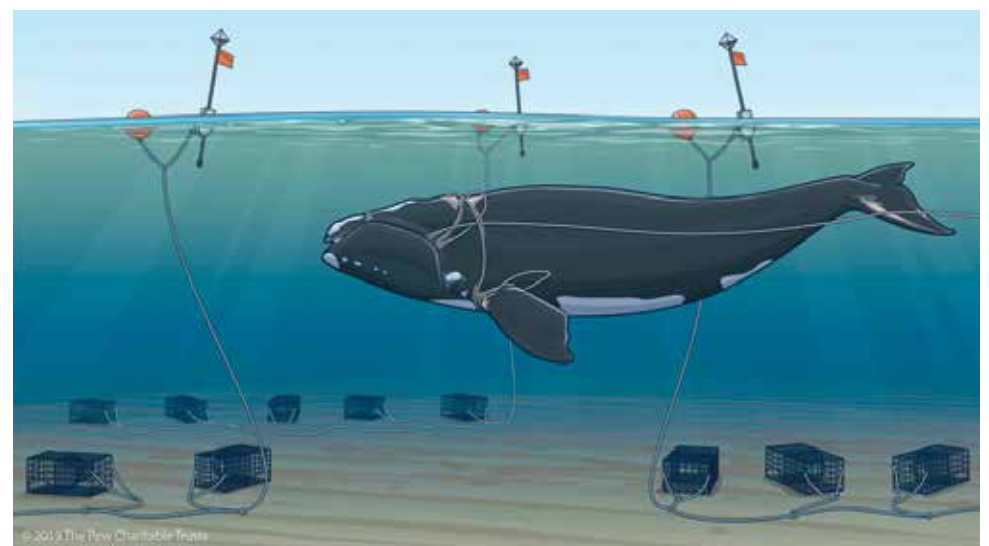
It is estimated that around 86% of the Right Whale population has been entangled at least once, and many are entangled multiple times; some individuals are known to have been entangled as many as eight times. In 2018 NMFS determined that 26% of the population is entangled each year, and that the risk of an entanglement is increasing at a rate of over 6% per year. NMFS also found that the severity of entanglement events were increasing in recent years.

This is where things get complicated. Between 1980 and 2019, more than 1,700 Right Whale entanglements have been documented. Yet, due to historically lax gear-marking requirements and a low rate of gear retrieval from entangled whales, scientists can only determine the region where the entanglement occurred and specific fishery’s gear in less than 2% of documented cases.

Let me restate that, because it’s really important to understand: In more than 98% of documented entanglement cases, it is impossible to determine the region where the entanglement occurred, and which fishery’s gear was responsible.

Maine’s lobster industry and politicians make use of this uncertainty regarding the source of entangling gear to make the claim that the Maine lobster industry isn’t part of the problem, despite the fact that Right Whales have been documented entangled in Maine lobster gear and that the waters off Maine have the greatest density of vertical lines in U.S. waters in Right Whale habitat. They also fail to mention that the Maine congressional delegation and lobster industry fought against gear-marking requirements for years further exacerbating the problem. Until September 2020, federal and state regulators had never required gear

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Right Whale

... continued from previous page

markings on lobster buoy lines in most of Maine's waters.

Since 2020, NMFS has documented that Maine lobster gear has entangled at least seven minke and humpback whales, some of which died as a result. The industry and politicians ignore these facts and insist that the Maine lobster fishery plays no part in the Right Whale's decline. Denial runs very deep in Maine.

There is so much tension around this issue that one Maine lobsterman, who in 2019 was on the team of stakeholders that advise NMFS on ways to reduce entanglements, had some of his gear cut after he voted in favor of a proposed measure that would have helped do that. Other Maine lobstermen have been threatened with gear or boat loss for being willing to try out a quickly developing technology called ropeless, or on-demand gear, which, because it does away with the persistent buoy line, would greatly diminish the chances of a whale becoming entangled.

This brings us to the present. Recently, we learned that Maine Sen. Susan Collins (R) quietly proposed language, with backing from the rest of the Maine delegation and governor, for the Omnibus spending bill that will simply nullify the court's decision (see story below). It would in effect, proclaim that the 2021 regulations are somehow magically in compliance with the MMPA and ESA at least for the next six years. She might as well have proclaimed that extinc-

tion is sustainable and war is peace!

Annie Clark, a spokeswoman for Sen. Collins, stated, "These environmental groups are seeking actions that would end lobstering in Maine." These kind of accusations, that those who are trying to protect whales want to shut down fisheries, though frequent, are simply not true. In fact, it is almost universally held that federal and state governments should give financial and other forms of assistance to speed up the development and production of whale-friendly gear, including ropeless gear, and

to generously assist fishermen and women in making necessary changes that would reduce, and ultimately end entanglements. Both whales and fisheries can, and should, co-exist and flourish.

Beyond paving the way to Right Whale extinction, Collins' rider will set an extremely dangerous precedent for laying waste to environmental laws and the protections they provide that are so desperately needed at this time on the planet.

In his book, Michael J. Moore asks the question; "What if we lose the North At-

lantic Right Whale species? It would be another nail in the coffin of the human species. If we continue to destroy biodiversity, what kind of world will be left for us to survive in? It is an ethical, moral, and practical necessity that humans stop destroying and overexploiting the diverse resources of the globe. If we do not, we will lose a species that is an icon, just like the lobster, snow crab, and cod. Furthermore, whales are an important ocean resource: they recycle nutrients from the seafloor, fertilizing the food web that fish feed on, delight ecotourists on whale-watching cruises, and provide us with other services that we have no idea of. Their loss would doubtless have unintended consequences of which we are unaware. It's up to all of us to decide if we care about sustaining a diverse and healthy planet.

"But above all, within the narrow walls of this book, we have to recognize that the pain and drawn-out suffering that rope entanglement causes to these animals is absolutely unacceptable, and is the ultimate reason why we have to stop what is an utter nightmare for individual, chronically entangled animals."

Truer words cannot be spoken. Somehow, this suffering and devastation must be stopped!

Russell Wray, an associate member of Veterans For Peace, is a sculptor/print-maker who grew up loving whales. It was whaling that first led him to become an activist, first as a crew member on board Greenpeace ships and later as a founding member of Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Threats (COAST) and a part of the Maine Coalition for North Atlantic Right Whales.



Snow Cone, who was recently spotted suffering from her fifth known entanglement, is not expected to live long.

U.S. Spending Bill 'Heartlessly' Dooms Right Whales to Extinction

By Julia Conley Dec 20, 2022

A policy rider included in the omnibus spending bill signed by President Joe Biden Dec. 29 is almost certain to doom the endangered North Atlantic right whale, environmental groups said Tuesday.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that this rider will doom the right whale to extinction."

In what Defenders of Wildlife president Jamie Rappaport Clark said was a "last-minute backroom deal," lawmakers including Maine's representatives and senators pushed to include a provision that would give the lobster fishing industry six years before it's required to take action that would prevent right whales from becoming entangled in fishing gear—which has contributed to the species' plummeting population.

The species is down to just 340 individual whales and 70 females of breeding age. Entanglement in lobster fishing gear kills an average of four right whales per year—six times higher than the rate seen as biologically sustainable, according to Defenders of Wildlife.

Non-fatal entanglements can also cause infections and interfere with

reproduction.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that this rider will doom the right whale to extinction," Jane Davenport, a senior attorney at Defenders of Wildlife, told *The Washington Post*. "Even if you got rid of all other sources of mortality, entanglements with fishing gear alone are enough to drive the species to extinction by reducing births and increasing deaths." "If this rider goes through, there will be blood on the hands of Maine politicians," Erica Fuller, a senior attorney at the Conservation Law Foundation, told the *Post*. "With the rate we've been killing right whales, extinction is expected to occur between the next 20 to 40 years. In the absence of the new rule, we've got more years of unsustainable killing going on."

The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) said the omnibus spending bill, which will fund the government through September 2023 if passed, falls far short of what is needed to protect wildlife. The additional funding the draft legislation includes for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "remains a cut in real dollars after accounting for inflation" and is "insufficient to address the decade of flat EPA funding," said

the group, while funding for the U.S. Interior Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is "well short of what's needed to address the extinction crisis."

Brett Hartl, government affairs director for CBD, denounced Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patrick Leahy (D-VT) as "ex-

groups that wrote to Schumer, Leahy, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) warning that the inclusion of the rider "opens the door to similar provisions in the next Congress to circumvent environmental laws and interfere with active judicial and administrative processes."

'A hundred years from now, no one will remember or care about the trivial victories Democrats will try to claim in this legislation, but they'll mourn the loss of the right whale,' said one advocate.

inction Democrats who just heartlessly put special interests above our nation's beautiful natural heritage."

"Sacrificing a great whale to extinction in exchange for funding the government is immoral," said Hartl. "Doing so just to give Sen. Schumer another political chit in his pocket is simply pathetic. A hundred years from now, no one will remember or care about the trivial victories Democrats will try to claim in this legislation, but they'll mourn the loss of the right whale."

Last week, CBD was among several

The bill "will have devastating, irrevocable, extinction-level impacts on the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale," said Clark. "This is a shameful outcome and political dealing at its absolute worst. We are extremely disappointed that congressional leaders are willing to cut this deal based on bad science and bad policy at a time when species on the brink need help the most."

Originally published by Common Dreams, commondreams.org.

Julia Conley is a staff writer for Common Dreams.

Can We Stop the Sixth Extinction?

Mass extinction will have far-reaching, potentially cataclysmic consequences for humankind



By Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan

The words of United Nations Secretary General António Guterres couldn't have been starker:

"We are waging a war on nature. Ecosystems have become playthings of profit. Human activities are laying waste to once-thriving forests, jungles, farmland, oceans, rivers, seas and lakes. Our land,

water, and air are poisoned by chemicals and pesticides, and choked with plastics. The addiction to fossil fuels has thrown our climate into chaos. Unsustainable production and monstrous consumption habits are degrading our world. Humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction ... with a million species at risk of disappearing forever."

Guterres was opening the global summit of the Convention on Biological Di-

versity, or COP15 in U.N. parlance, which just wrapped up in Montreal. The convention was launched at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, alongside the U.N.'s better-known climate change negotiations.

The biodiversity convention is the best hope we have to stop what has been called the sixth extinction, as human activities extinguish tens of thousands of species every year, never to return. The previous five extinctions occurred from tens of mil-

lions to hundreds of millions of years ago. The most recent one happened 66 million years ago, when, scientists believe, a 6-mile-wide asteroid smashed into water off Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. The impact caused massive tsunamis, acid rain and wildfires, then blanketed the atmosphere with sun-blocking dust, lowering temperatures worldwide and wiping out the dinosaurs.

We humans are now essentially doing to the planet what that asteroid did. As *New Yorker* writer Elizabeth Kolbert eloquently describes in her Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Sixth Extinction*, humans have evolved into a predator without equal. We overtake and destroy habitats with abandon, driving other species into permanent oblivion.

Key agreements forged in December in Montreal were signed by 196 nations. The United States, along with the Vatican,

Mother Earth: Her Whales By Gary Snyder

An owl winks in the shadows
A lizard lifts on tiptoe, breathing hard
Young male sparrow stretches up his neck,
big head, watching—

The grasses are working in the sun. Turn it green.
Turn it sweet. That we may eat.
Grow our meat.

Brazil says "sovereign use of Natural Resources"
Thirty thousand kinds of unknown plants.
The living actual people of the jungle
sold and tortured—
And a robot in a suit who peddles a delusion called "Brazil"
can speak for them?

The whales turn and glisten, plunge
and sound and rise again,
Hanging over subtly darkening deeps
Flowing like breathing planets
in the sparkling whorls of
living light—

And Japan quibbles for words on
what kinds of whales they can kill?
A once-great Buddhist nation
dribbles methyl mercury
like gonorrhea
in the sea.

Pere David's Deer, the Elaphure,
Lived in the tule marshes of the Yellow River
Two thousand years ago—and lost its home to rice—
The forests of Lo-yang were logged and all the silt &
Sand flowed down, and gone, by 1200 AD—
Wild Geese hatched out in Siberia
head south over basins of the Yang, the Huang,
what we call "China"
On flyways they have used a million years.
Ah China, where are the tigers, the wild boars,
the monkeys,
like the snows of yesteryear
Gone in a mist, a flash, and the dry hard ground
Is parking space for fifty thousand trucks.

Is man most precious of all things?
—then let us love him, and his brothers, all those
Fading living beings—

North America, Turtle Island, taken by invaders
who wage war around the world.
May ants, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk
Rise! and pull away their giving
from the robot nations.

Solidarity. The People.
Standing Tree People!
Flying Bird People!
Swimming Sea People!
Four-legged, two-legged people!

How can the head-heavy power-hungry politic scientist
Government two-world Capitalist-Imperialist
Third-world Communist paper-shuffling male
non-farmer jet-set bureaucrats
Speak for the green of the leaf? Speak for the soil?

(Ah Margaret Mead ... do you sometimes dream of Samoa?)

The robots argue how to parcel out our Mother Earth
To last a little longer
like vultures flapping
Belching, gurgling,
near a dying doe.

"In yonder field a slain knight lies—
We'll fly to him and eat his eyes
with a down
derry derry derry down down."

An Owl winks in the shadow
A lizard lifts on tiptoe
breathing hard
The whales turn and glisten
plunge and
Sound, and rise again
Flowing like breathing planets

In the sparkling whorls

Of living light.

*Respecting
and following the
leadership of Indigenous
communities is the first
step toward making
peace with Mother
Nature, while
we still can.*

didn't sign, as neither is party to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

A central achievement of the Montreal negotiations was the "30x30" pledge to protect 30% of Earth's lands, oceans, coastal areas and inland waters by 2030. Also agreed to was the creation of a fund to help developing nations protect biodiversity, slated to reach \$200 billion annually by 2030, while phasing down harmful subsidies by \$500 billion per year. A requirement for the "full and active involvement" of Indigenous peoples was also written into the text.

"It's absolutely impossible to create a biodiversity agreement without the inclusion of Indigenous rights, because 80% of remaining biodiversity is Indigenous lands and territories," Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, executive director of Indigenous Climate Action and member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, said on

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Sixth Extinction

... continued from previous page the *Democracy Now!* news hour. “Some of the biggest challenges and risks that have come out of this COP is the fact that there aren’t any real mechanisms with real teeth, similar to COP27 [the recent U.N. climate summit in Egypt], that actually protect our rights, our culture, and our ability to advance our rights to say yes and no to these types of agreements.”

Eriel Deranger first appeared on *Democracy Now!* while in Copenhagen in 2009, attending a different COP15—the 15th meeting of the U.N. climate change convention. She was delivering a basket to the Canadian Embassy in advance of then-Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s arrival for those pivotal climate negotiations:

“Inside the basket were copies of the treaties that are being violated by the Canada tar sands, and copies of the Kyoto Protocol, which he signed on to, as well as a copy of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, to remind him that there is something else that he needs to sign on to in order to really fully respect indigenous people’s rights.”

It was at that 2009 climate summit that wealthy nations pledged to create a \$100 billion per year fund by 2020, to help poorer nations adapt to and mitigate climate change. To date, the fund has fallen far short of the pledge, and much of the money available is offered as loans, not grants. So activists like Deranger have reason to be skeptical of the \$200 billion per year biodiversity pledge just made in Montreal.

“They’re centering colonial economic ideals,” Deranger said after the December meeting. “They’re still giving national and colonial states the power to determine what Indigenous rights look like when they’re implemented in these agreements, and how lands will be developed, undeveloped, protected. ... In Canada, we are committing to ‘30×30,’ millions and millions of dollars for biodiversity protection, Indigenous protection, and conservation areas, yet we are not talking about ending the expansion of the Alberta tar sands.”

Mass extinction will have far-reaching, potentially cataclysmic consequences for humankind. António Guterres was right: we are waging a war on nature. Respecting and following the leadership of Indigenous communities is the first step towards making peace with Mother Nature, while we still can.

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Denis Moynihan has worked with *Democracy Now!* since 2000. He is a best-selling author and a syndicated columnist with *King Features*. He lives in Colorado, where he founded community radio station KFFR 88.3 FM in the town of Winter Park.

13 Reminders Why Elephants Are Terrific

By Arapahoe Staff

You probably don’t need another reason to love elephants, but just in case you do, here are 13 great reasons why elephants are just the best.

by the entire herd. When males are about 12 years old, they leave the herd to live on their own while the females stay with family herd. Females will often stay with their mothers their whole lives so elephants often become great-grandmothers.



Studies have found that some elephants have evolved to be tuskless in response to ivory poaching.

1. Elephants are the largest land mammal. Despite their size, they can run up to 25 miles per hour! Since one of their feet is always on the ground, technically they’re actually speed-walking at 25 mph.

2. Elephants purr just like cats! Not only do they communicate through trum-

4. Elephants are highly sensitive and caring animals, much like humans. If a baby elephant cries, the herd will touch and caress the baby with their trunks to soothe it. They are highly intelligent animals with complex emotions, feelings, compassion and self-awareness (elephants

elephant never forgets.

8. Just as humans can be left- or right-handed, elephants have a preference for using their left or right tusk.

9. Elephant trunks have over 40,000 muscles which are used for breathing, smelling and communicating. They are capable of picking up something as big and heavy as an average-sized horse and something as tiny as a grain of rice.

10. Playing in the water isn’t just fun for elephants, it’s good for them inside and out! When they’re able to float, the buoyancy provides their leg joints a much needed break. Mud acts as a sunscreen, bug repellent and moisturizer, which is helpful because elephants have extremely sensitive skin.

11. Elephants aren’t actually scared of mice, they’re scared of bees! African farmers raise bees to keep the elephants away from their crops, the all-natural elephant repellent.

12. Elephants can eat up to 600 pounds of food a day. That’s how much an entire vending machine weighs!

13. One elephant molar is the size of a brick. Think that’s big? The tongue of a blue whale weighs more than an entire elephant. Elephants may be the largest land animal but the blue whale is the largest animal on the planet.

Like humans, elephants mourn the death of their loved ones. They gently touch and caress the skull of deceased loved ones with their trunks, and they will pause for several minutes of silence in the place where their loved one dies, even several years after their death.

pet sounds, snorts, roars, cries and purring, elephants pick up sounds of rumbles with their feet and they can hear communications over long distances though the vibrations that come up through their feet and into their ears.

3. Elephants have deep family bonds. The herd is led by the matriarch (the female head of a family). Calves are raised

are one of very few species to recognize themselves in a mirror!).

5. The gestation period of an elephant is 22 months. That’s almost 2 years, the longest pregnancy of any mammal! Baby elephants are born blind but they are immediately able to stand up and walk. The herd celebrates the birth together during a ceremony of trumpeting and touching.

Everything Was Wrong



By Denny Riley

I joined the U.S. Air Force in 1963 when I was eighteen, almost right out of high school. After basic training in San Antonio I received orders to Air Intelligence Training Center. That was good news to put in a letter mailed home. My mom and dad hadn't wanted me to join. They were inveterate braggers about their children and both of my older brothers were in college. It wouldn't be fair to say my parents wanted college for me only to brag. I don't remember a constant comparison with my brothers. Yet I was well into manhood before I was reconciled to never becoming a member of one of the learned professions in the classical sense of the term.

Being a teenager was fun but the classroom part of it made me miserable. No one seemed to doubt the "one size fits all" situation where if you didn't fit in you were a failure. I would have rather done anything than go on to more of that. One of my high school buddies wanted me to go to Hollywood with him and try to be a comedy team. Another wanted me to buy a car with him and just hit the road. Both of those sounded like great adventures but also frightening. I didn't feel capable of taking care of myself. The term "three hots and a cot" with regard to the military had already reached my ears. The Air Force looked like an adventure, but a safer one, so I joined. Getting orders to something as adventurous sounding as Air Intelligence Training Center justified everything.

Those orders were also the first of two sets of orders I received that within a month of receiving them was ordered not to tell anyone I'd received. Kind of a loopy loop, but it's true. When my class for Air Intelligence Training Center assembled on the drill pad at an airbase in Denver, we were instructed to tell anyone who asked what we did in the Air Force, that we were truck drivers, the first any of us heard we shouldn't brag about our orders. I was eventually given the opportunity to tell someone I was a truck driver. After I'd completed Air Intelligence Training Center I went home on leave. One night I was in a bar waiting for friends when a man came in and sat on the stool next to mine. This was a winter night in Rochester, New York, so his trench coat and fedora had no meaning other than he was dressed appropriately. He'd been a passenger on my flight home, a passenger with whom I'd made eye contact. I'd been in uniform, so I figured he'd remember me, but when I said, "Hey we were on the same plane yesterday," he said he didn't remember me. We carried on a very brief conversation. He was in town on business, I was home on leave. He asked what I did in the Air Force. I said I was a truck driver. My friends came in then. The man finished his drink and left. The next day a man of his description visited the mother of a high school friend and visited a grocery store owner I'd worked for after school and on Saturdays and

asked about me. Three months later I had a Top Secret clearance.

The second time I received orders that I was later told were classified was when I stood with hundreds of other airmen in a hangar on Don Mueang airbase in Bangkok. It was a hot tropical night. We were awaiting flights to fighter wings at bases upcountry. A master sergeant called us to attention and ordered us not to tell anyone back home we were in Thailand. Later, when I gave that incident some thought, I realized it was an example of information being classified for no other reason than to keep it from our fellow Americans. The people of Laos and North Vietnam who we bombed every day knew we were there. The Chinese just across the Laos and North Vietnam northern borders knew we were there. The people in the villages near our loud and raucous airbases knew we were there. And everyone I talked to while home on leave before I went over knew I was there because Thailand was printed boldly on my orders, and the orders were not classified.

Between my time at Air Intelligence Training Center and my time with the fighter wing that bombed Laos and

war plan included all of SAC's nuclear weapon capabilities, the Single Integration Operation Plan (SIOP). Our bomb wing's targets included Moscow and Kiev.

If launched, the war plan would wipe out millions in the Soviet Union. Vaporize many of them. I was 19 when I began working in the target room. I didn't question our bomb wing's mission. At first I was thrilled to be a part of it. Eventually it became routine. Even the ability to destroy the world can become routine. I'd been a good kid while growing up, yet with half a year of training I was comfortable abetting mass murder.

Life on the airbase was a cauldron of moral turpitude. Why wouldn't it be, with our accepted objective being the annihilation of millions. The logical assumption (if considered) had to be that we were at the crosshairs of a counter nuclear barrage. So many nukes were aimed at the same targets that we and our Cold War nuclear allies had an agreement called Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, or JSTPS. The United Kingdom, France, and the United States shared enough Top Secret information to ensure that United States aircraft did not arrive over Kiev at the same time as aircraft from the UK or France.

[A man] visited the mother of a high school friend and visited a grocery store owner I'd worked for after school and on Saturdays and asked about me. Three months later I had a Top Secret clearance.

North Vietnam, I was stationed for two years with a Strategic Air Command Bomb Wing at a treeless, flat airbase on the Great Plains. My duty section was in a vault within a windowless cinderblock building because our work was highly classified. What we did was build and maintain a war plan that if properly implemented would direct nuclear weapon-laden bombers to the skies over the Soviet Union. We built the war plan with maps, charts, radar-scope photography, proportional dividers, scissors, pencils, marker pens, rubber cement, and the coordinates sent to us in code from Strategic Air Command (SAC) headquarters. The actual documents we built, which varied at their end for different targets, were called the Bomb Run Insert, or the BRI. It was Top Secret Extremely Sensitive Information. We called it TSESI, said with a rapid slur, almost a hiss. The BRI was what the crews of our B-47 bombers would use to find their way from our base over the North Pole and down to above Soviet cities and military sites where they would expend ordnance, which means drop their bombs. This was the war plan. Our bomb wing was only one piece of it. The

You could get giddy, laugh out loud, if you gave it a little thought. There were so many bombs we might bomb our own side. I wasn't different from my buddies back home who were drinking beer and getting into laughing jags, except the serious activity in their lives was studying the college courses they selected to direct them toward a career. When they laughed it was about a prank in the dorm or drinking too much beer in a college hangout. All I had to take seriously was military protocol, which for an airman of my low rank meant shine my shoes, make my bunk, do the squadron details I drew, salute officers, and maintain the Top Secret Extremely Sensitive Information on which I worked. Beyond that, life was about raising hell in any way my Air Force pals and I could dream up. That seemed good at the start. One reason I joined the Air Force was to purge myself of a wild, aimless streak. Get it out of my system. A four-year hitch seemed time enough to do that. Then I could go back home and take on life the way everyone expected I should. That grand plan was stalled when I found immorality was at the core of Air Force life and without thinking decided to join in.

Of the men assigned to the bomb wing's Intelligence section I was the youngest. There were other enlisted airmen a little older than I was, and staff sergeants and lieutenants in their mid-20s, and a few older sergeants, lifers who were either cranky or drunks or cranky drunks. The rest of the intelligence team, over half, were men the same age as my high school coaches and scout leaders and my dad, men I'd looked up to when I was a boy, men I didn't cuss or smoke cigarettes in front of. The men that age that I met in the Air Force had been bomber crew members during WWII. Many of them had been enlisted men who were trained as bombardiers. In 1941, bombardiers were commissioned second lieutenants. The war came along, and they survived, moved up the ranks, and after the war, stayed in. My bomb wing's director of intelligence, a lieutenant colonel, was just such a man. As a boy from a Minnesota railroad town who joined the army during the depression, he was commissioned, and the military offered him a lifetime of respect, relative comfort, and a good retirement. Lame and bald when I knew him, he kept a photo under the glass on his desk of himself as a dashing young bomber crew member.

Strategic Air Command headquarters regularly made changes to the war plan. Our bomb wing, and every other wing with nuclear weapons, received coded messages and orders to implement the new material on a specific date at a specific time. To build a BRI, we built what we called strip charts. For each target we took a large aerial chart and cut a strip six inches wide across it where our bomber would fly. When the flight bearing changed, a new chart heading that way was cut. It was rubber-cemented to the previous chart. This was done every time the bearing changed. In the end each bomber's strip chart, if laid out, appeared a straight line passing through every checkpoint from our base to the target, the Designated Ground Zero (DGZ), represented by a yellow dot inside a red triangle. All the annotations (compass bearing, altitude, time to DGZ, et cetera) had to be applied by a commissioned officer. Every document had to be stamped at the top and bottom "TOP SECRET ES1." A major or lieutenant colonel was required to do the stamping. The final document was folded into an eight-inch-by-six-inch accordion piece and inserted in a folder so the navigator could flip through it as the aircraft flew through the cold arctic sky to its DGZ.

In the vault, a dozen of us stood around a large waist-high table collating the components of the new war plan. As we shuffled papers, the World War II bomber crew members carried the conversation. One of them, who looked like my high school shop teacher, shared his stories of being shot down two times, once over the English Channel, where he was rescued by a fishing boat, and once over France, where a farm family hid him until our troops fought their way to where he was hiding. He told us he taught the farm family how to make French fries. Every fifth word from his mouth was a word I'd never use around my shop teacher. That was the case with all the WWII crew members. I thought grown men didn't go around talking dirty. I thought talking dirty was a part of teenage rebellion. The more you did it the more rebellious you were, but these were grown men. They told jokes so bawdy there was nothing funny but the profanity.

One sultry summer evening after I'd been at the base five months, I walked back from the chow hall to my barracks alone. Dressed in olive-drab fatigues, I stood on the barracks steps, smoked a cigarette, then another, and became absorbed in thoughts of the foul-mouthed world of the target room. When I snapped out of it, I saw I'd been staring at the identical buildings that ran rank and file across the flat treeless airbase. I was reminded of a concern I'd had on my second day in basic training when I looked at the utilitarian rows of wooden two-story barracks and headquarters buildings and worried that this hitch in the Air Force might destroy my appreciation of design. Less than a year later while smoking my third consecutive cigarette I saw how naïve that had been. The base had 26 identical barracks and I was now blind to their lack of style, and when I noticed I was, I felt some-

thing had been taken away. Then I thought a lot had been taken away.

Behind me in the barracks I heard country music from a radio and soul music from a record player. I heard heated shouting from a craps game probably rolled for payday stakes. I heard laughter of the kind directed at another person's misfortune. I heard yelling by someone trying to be heard over all the rest. I heard angry words about bumming cigarettes. The end of the month was three days away and everyone was broke or close to it. Life in the barracks, where a squadron of young men

and speaking in a singsong way, "now that you white folks taught me how to use a spoon."

One of the Black airmen, Johnson from Philadelphia, a guy who hated the Air Force more than anyone I knew, was on his second hitch, a situation he couldn't explain. Though he was five years older than I, he and I became good barracks buddies, and through him I began to hang out with the other Black guys in the barracks while we were on base. In town was a different thing. A few times I went to town with Johnson. We went to the Black neighborhood called Elm Town, to parties where I was the only

What we did was build and maintain a war plan that if properly implemented would direct nuclear weapon-laden bombers to the skies over the Soviet Union.

with little in common but the same uniform and haircut and something dysfunctional where they came from, was terrible. It was worse than standing out on the steps. But I turned and went in.

The barracks was home to a hundred airmen, although no one ever called it home. If anyone had, they would have been pummeled, then laughed at for a month. Some of the airmen had responsible and important duties. Take me. I was no more than a big kid, but I walked around with Top Secrets cramming my head. No matter what our job was, when we were off duty all of us in the barracks had nothing better to do than kill time until our DOS, our Date of Separation from active duty. Everyone knew his DOS as well as he knew his name.

The airbase was like a small town. There was a base movie theater ("the base flick"), the Base Exchange, a barber shop, library, gym, chapel. Most worthless may have been the chapel. The chaplain, a person you might expect to deal in moral guidance and compassion, was in truth no more than an Air Force officer. When a young airman I knew who was engaged to a girl back home went to the chaplain troubled by a homosexual relationship he had with a tech sergeant with 18 years in the Air Force (and a son at Virginia Military Institute), the chaplain did nothing more than report them to their commander. The airman and the sergeant both received bad conduct discharges.

The racism in the barracks was an inch thick. During a payday-inspired beer bash, a white guy from Tennessee named Jessie had enough of interracial cohabitation to say to a Black guy from Alabama named Otis, "Why don't you people go back to Africa?!"

"I'm not going back to Africa," Otis told him smiling

white person. All anyone had to know was I came with Johnson and everything was fine with them. With me, well, I'd never known a Black person until I was in basic training, so I felt obvious at these parties. Two times I found a girl fascinating but both times Johnson told me to cool my heels.

This little city on the Great Plains wasn't friendly to people who weren't white no matter why they were there. Thanking a GI for serving wasn't in vogue. This was the middle 1960s, so even cities that prided themselves in liberal thought had neighborhoods where Blacks could live and neighborhoods where they could not. And the neighborhoods where they could were called colored neighborhoods or something more explicitly derogatory. One night in the barracks some of us were watching the tube when a news flash said racial rioting had broken out in Rochester. It said whole city blocks were ablaze. I got up and headed for the pay phone to call home. Johnson yelled after me, "Don't worry Riley, it's not happening in your neighborhood."

Johnson told me a few times, told other guys too, that he kept a brick in his locker. He said he took it out late at light and rubbed it down with motor oil. He also had a knack for holding a lit cigarette behind his ear if both of his hands were busy.

There was base housing for the married men with families. Duplexes and ranch homes. The nicer homes went to the higher-ranked officers. The oldest homes, left over from WWII, were for Black families. The racism was so blatant, so obvious. But I grew up in a city segregated exactly that way, so I made little of it. You hear that Truman integrated the military in 1948, but I never saw any sign

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'I looked at the utilitarian rows of wooden two-story barracks and headquarters buildings and worried that this hitch in the Air Force might destroy my appreciation of design.'

Everything Was Wrong

... continued from previous page

of it. We all ate in the same chow hall, sure. We passed through the chow line with our trays and carried them to a chair at a four-man table. Sometimes you were with friends but often you ate with strangers. Once, at a table there was another white guy and me and two Black guys. The other white guy had been at the table first. Less than a minute after the rest of us sat down, all strangers, the other white guy picked up his tray, slammed it down on the table, stood and yelled, "I hate niggers!" and stomped out of the chow hall, leaving behind not only an un-bussed tray but an uncomfortable and awkward moment. I said, "I guess the green beans didn't agree with him," and life went on.

I walked back to the barracks wondering if those guys or anyone in the chow hall knew what this base was about other than a place to wait for your DOS. I wondered if they knew we had eight B-47 bombers on the alert pad with nuclear weapons in their bellies, ready to go in minutes if the President made the call, and many more bombers set to follow.

On paydays we threw in some cash and one of the guys old enough bought beer, and we had a loud bull session. Beer and cigarettes and stories about what big shots we were back home. Motown on the record player. It was at one of these that Jessie and Otis squared off verbally.

Somehow, and I don't remember how, my friend Delaney met a girl in town named Sheila. One Friday he said I should come to town with him. Sheila was going to have a party and she had a friend I should meet. Her friend was Midge. She and I were pretty much thrown together. She was nice looking but not beautiful the way I thought the girl back home I wrote to was. And Midge talked as though she was off a ranch, like she told me I was ornery, but she was off a ranch, and she was funny, had a great

*I'd been a good kid while growing up,
yet with half a year of training I was comfortable
abetting mass murder.*

smile and I knew nothing about girls from ranches. In a narrow hallway to the bathroom Midge and I leaned into each other and kissed, and she slid her hand down the front of my pants. I don't think she knew what that might mean to a boy 19 living in the barracks. Looks, love, a girl back home, everything went out the window. One month I was the most lonesome boy in the Northern Hemisphere, the next month I was making it to town whenever I could. The talk in the barracks was I had a shack job. I'd heard that said about other guys, guys I didn't know because they were in and out of the barracks, only there to do what they had to do. Now I was shackled up too. A year and a half later when I left for Southeast Asia, Midge was broken-hearted, and I was glad to be leaving.

It was winter and I was glad to be leaving because I thought anyplace would be better than a barren base on the Great Plains where the Cold War was not only cold, it was boring. But where I went was worse. The targets we worked on were not hypothetical. We killed people every day. Some sorties were armed reconnaissance. Anything moving was a target. Kill anything that moves. And the bars off base were filled with pretty girls in dreadful makeup who would go upstairs with you for two dollars and maybe give you the clap no additional charge. When I was nearing my DOS I felt so dirty I didn't want to go back home, but I did.

Nothing of what I thought life would be like after the Air Force worked out. I was a likable guy, so people liked me, but I quit college before the first semester was over and quit again a year later. In between I worked a fistful

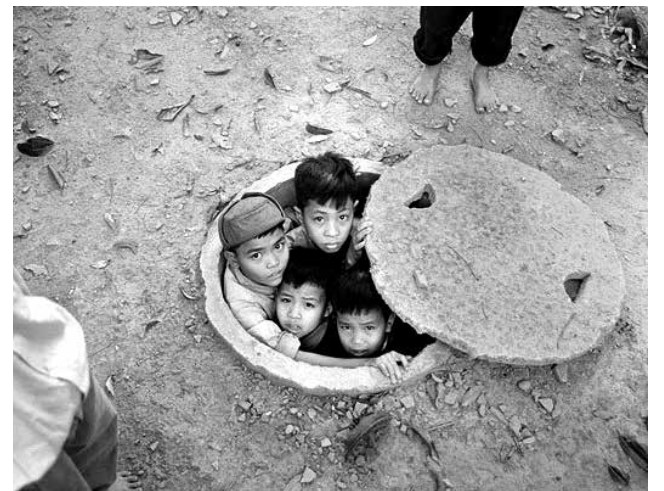


The bombing of Hanoi.

of jobs I hated and quit. I thumbed to cities where I knew no one and when I got back home (I lived with my mom), dated nice girls who confused me because they thought I had something to say. I mainly knew stories of degradation and if I drank too much, I blurted out the worst of it.

One of my raps was that if there ever was a nuclear holocaust, I had been a torch bearer for it. For two years I'd worked to ensure the holocaust could occur. When I left SAC, my part of the war plan was in good shape. Anybody I ever told that to didn't care. They might say they were scared by the possibility, but when I explained with a few details that we were always armed and ready to go and so was the other side so no one would escape the annihilation, they usually said, "Hmm."

I thought about nukes every day. I thought about the total devastation that could rain down on us unexpectedly



nally admitted in 1973 that our war in Viet Nam was lost and pulled our troops out, and when in 1975 Saigon fell, I was barely paying attention. In my opinion everything I did in my four years in uniform was wrong. That's a hell of a thing to live with, but that's my conclusion. Paying attention to the war would have only made it worse. People have told me to get over it. I sometimes ask if they think they can get over their four years in college. I say four years in the Air Force were my education and you're nuts if you don't listen to me. Because I won't wallow in government propaganda doesn't mean I'm melancholy. It means I learned something. Four years of college would have prepared me to be a servant of the beast. If colleges didn't do that, the government would shut them down. I'm telling you what I learned while I served the beast. What I saw and did is contrary to what the American ethic is said to be.

Every time I shared that rap, I spoiled someone's fun.

Life went on. I often thought of doing myself in. Dozens of veterans do it every day. But I wanted a bigger audience of sincere mourners. Eventually I drove a cab part time in San Francisco and lived in a bungalow behind a Victorian on Fulton Street. Every day I walked with my dog Lucky over the hill in Alamo Square to the Grand Piano Café on Haight Street where I sat and wrote in my journal or worked on the novel I was writing. That sounds as though I had direction, but I hadn't learned how to write, and I had many things bothering me.

One day as I walked with Lucky over the hill in Alamo Square everything went white. There was nothing, no sound, no feeling, and nothing happened. The world was over. Then it came back. It became a haze then the haze cleared. I looked around. No one else was standing still looking around. I wondered if it really happened. Then over the next year it happened three more times. After, I told a few people about it. They looked at me as though I should change my rap. It did happen, though, and I'm left with a haunting emptiness lurking like a ghost in my soul.

Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of the U.S. war in Viet Nam, a writer, and a member of San Francisco Veterans For Peace Chapter 69.

The Christmas Truce of 1914

On both sides arose the strains of 'Silent Night' ...

This speech was delivered by Bill Gilson, president of NYC Chapter 34, to Peace Action of Staten Island and The Humanist Society of New York in 2014.

By Bill Gilson

It was the night before Christmas. The year was 1914. World War One had begun five months earlier. A bitter cold had seeped in during the day. Rain had mercifully stopped. 1914 was to be one of the most severe winters to occur in northern France. The assassination of the heir of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Franz Josef Ferdinand, and his wife on July 28 of that year had put in motion a spiral of events that would launch the First World War.

Existing treaties compelled some nations to enter the war, while others entered into the fray for self-serving reasons. In the end, Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, Russia, Japan, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Rumania, Serbia, Italy, Turkey, Belgium, Australia, Canada, China and later the United States would become part of the carnage in the “war to end all wars.”

Far from the early days of enthusiasm for going to war “for God and Country,” the stark reality that confronted the British, French, Belgian, and German young men on the western front was extremely grim. The western front ran almost 400 miles across northern France and Belgium. Germany overran Belgium and marched toward Paris. They were stopped at the Battle of the Marne. From then on, the war was reduced to fighting from trenches without either side making any forward advance. It would remain that way for most of the next four years.

Soldiers dug in for a long series of stalemates punctuated by deadly, futile charges in which men were cut down by never-ending fire from machine guns, repeating rifles, relentless artillery shelling and mortars. To make life even more unbearable, trenches were prone to fill to the knees in some places with freezing water and mud. Bodies lay for days if not weeks entrapped in “No Man’s Land”—the killing field between opposing trenches, or entangled on barbed wire until it was safe to retrieve them during a lull in battle. The sight and stench of fallen comrades left in the trench, unburied, was also disturbing. Warding off the company of lice, fleas and rats was

an ongoing battle in the trenches.

The new Pope, Benedict XV, made a universal appeal for a Christmas Truce that was ignored by the belligerent parties, though surely noted by the frontline troops.

Christmas packages were delivered to the British troops as a gift from King George V and Princess Mary containing chocolates and a picture of the King. Likewise, the Germans received similar packages from Kaiser Wilhelm II with a meerschaum pipe and a bottle of schnapps. The Kaiser also sent 100,000 Christmas trees with candles. So Christmas was very much on the minds of the soldiers on the western front in the winter of 1914.

The New Year offered an opportunity to quickly end the madness of war and achieve victory—a desire shared by troops on both sides to get home and begin a normal life once again. Set against this horrific background of suffering and misery on both sides arose the strains of “Silent Night” from the German trenches, that were only 30 to 70 yards apart in some places. Next appeared Christmas trees with lighted candles placed at the top of the trenches. Signs appeared in simple English: “You no shoot, we no shoot.”



Imagine the shock to the British at this sight. Before too long, the singing of Christmas carols sprang from the British side. Slowly and cautiously, men began to leave the trenches from both sides. They made their way into No Man’s Land. After emotional greetings, Germans and British buried the dead, sometimes working together. When this task ended, more singing, hand shaking and exchange of gifts, sausage, schnapps, cigarettes, chocolates cemented the camaraderie along with exchange of addresses and promises to meet after all this was over.

The next day, Christmas, was cold and frosty. The fraternization of the troops began anew and lasted throughout the day with improvised soccer games, more kicking a makeshift ball around than an actual game, although there was one report of a game between German and British troops, with the Germans winning 3 to 2. In some sections of the line, the truce lasted into midnight. In others, it depended on the location of troops on the 27-mile British sector of the line. Still in other places, it lasted until New Year’s Day.

Many reports of the event were circulated in newspapers in Britain, fewer in Germany, through letters sent home richly describing the events. For staging this celebration, troops from both sides were rotated and replaced with fresh troops who had not experienced the truce. None were disciplined. For those who participated in the Christmas Truce, it became a life-changing moment that they would never forget. At the conclusion of World War One, on the 11th hour of the 11th month in the year 1918, four empires had been dissolved: the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman. Fifty-nine million men had been mobilized and over 37 million people had been killed or wounded. Eight million military lay dead.

The devastation across Europe was enormous. An en-



tire generation of men had been wiped out. Much of the landscape and buildings lay in ruin by artillery shelling and bombing. People were starving from shortages of food and the disruption of trade. The mobilization for war had taken away millions of men from the agriculture labor force, thus cutting food production.

Because this year is the 100th anniversary of the Christmas Truce, we in the peace movement can take this opportunity to pause and renew our commitment to making a better world through peace, at a time when the United States is embarked on a policy of perpetual war. It is not too late to stop an endless war in Iraq and Syria. We have spent over \$1.1 billion in Iraq and Syria since August of this year, yet Congress has not debated or authorized our latest war. It will take grassroots pressure to move Congress. A coalition of organizations has called for National Days of Action, starting Tuesday Armistice/Veterans Day through Sunday Nov. 16.

The real message of the Christmas Truce is that with human empathy we can reach across trenches of indifference and honor each others humanity.

In the words of Dr. King: “Peace is not the absence of war, but the presence of justice.” The bigger question, I believe, is what would that justice look like ?

In keeping with this question, the Veterans For Peace national board recognizes that the violence of war has been epidemic in this country since its founding. We acknowledge the 500-year war on the indigenous peoples, the ongoing war and racism against Black and Brown communities, the long history of racist immigration policies, the economic war against the poor of all colors, the war against Muslims right here in the United States since 9/11, and unending violence against women.

We see a connection between violence and police militarization here in the United States and in U.S. wars abroad. With this in mind, “Justice at Home, Justice Abroad” is the new slogan of VFP. It is also a reminder to the peace community that the peace and justice we seek has to start with us in our very own communities, involving ourselves in the struggles of the Other. We all share the same address: Planet Earth—there is no “Planet B.”

VFP has engaged with community groups in St. Louis where our national office is located. It was on the ground in Ferguson, eight miles away, after Michael Brown was killed, offering assistance where needed. These are some of the ways “Peace With Justice” works. It starts with us, the organized peace community, engaging with Muslim communities and communities of color that confront police violence, stop and frisk, unjust sentencing, solitary confinement, and the lucrative private prison system. The organized peace community would be strengthened by engaging with climate justice organizations as well. We must stop the war on Mother Earth, the perpetual war on the world and the war on our people here at home.

Bill Gilson (1936–2016) was a Navy veteran and long-time president of New York City Veterans For Peace Chapter 34.



War Is Not Part and Parcel of Human Nature

Powerful findings from several decades of Peace Anthropology

By Douglas P. Fry

Anthropology holds some treasures for peace activists and scholars, including documentation that non-warring peace systems exist, descriptions of how peaceful societies successfully keep the peace, and solid evidence—despite recurring claims to the contrary—that war is not part and parcel of human nature.

At the same time, there have been some recent attempts to hijack anthropological data in support of bellicose views of humanity.

In his memoirs, for example, U.S. anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon trumpets again the repudiated claim that Yanomamö men who have killed have more children, with the implication that violence reigns among tribal peoples and that killing may have had evolutionary payoffs.

Similarly, U.S. psychologist Steven Pinker very selectively presents anthropological studies to support his thesis that the deep human past was extremely violent.

British primatologist Richard Wrangham continues to propose that chimpanzee aggression in some way supports the proposal that humans have psychological tendencies to attack their neighbors. In response, the dean of Kalahari San (Bushman) studies, Richard Lee, has recently dubbed such views as representative of the “Bellicose School.”

Whether undertaken to selectively grab anthropological information to bolster a Hobbesian take on humanity or to attack anthropological findings that contradict the bellicose models, such looting and sacking of anthropology has become commonplace. However, the preponderance of anthropological findings shows that Thomas Hobbes and now the Bellicose School are way off the mark. Anthropology actually supports a more peaceful view of the world.

One anthropological gem involves “peace systems”—clusters of neighboring



societies that do not make war with each other, and sometimes not at all. Peace systems exist in various parts of the world such as in Malaysia, Australia, India, Brazil, and Canada. I have suggested that the European Union is also a peace system, for it was formed out of the ashes of war with the explicit goal of preventing future wars on the continent. In that main purpose, the European Union has been highly successful; a mere 69 years after the end of the Second World War, war within the EU peace system has become unthinkable. That is no small achievement for peace.

Peninsular Malaysia provides an anthropological example of a peace system consisting of the neighboring Chewong, Semai, Jahai, Btsisi, Batek, and other Semang groups. In values and behavior, these Malaysian societies are non-violent and seek to avoid overt conflict. Norwegian anthropologist Signe Howell, who has worked with the Chewong, emphasises that none of these neighboring Malaysian societies make war. This Malaysian peace system is long-standing, as reflected in early descriptions of these peoples’ daily life as nonviolent and lack of violent resistance to encroachment by outsiders. The mere existence of peace systems also answers skeptics who assert that living in peace is simply not possible.

As the late Kenneth Boulding once quipped: “Anything that exists is possible.”

Over recent centuries, non-Western peoples have been portrayed as “primitive” and “savage” and such views have

facilitated the atrocities of enslavement, displacement, and annihilation directed against Indigenous peoples during colonialism and subsequently. The existence of peaceful peoples and peace systems might not be anticipated, as they contradict the familiar stereotypes of uncivilized and warlike savages. Additionally, in my experience of teaching and lecturing, many people doubt the very existence of peace systems and peaceful societies due to ingrained Hobbesian beliefs in

people and other peace systems is: how do they keep the peace? Research by different anthropologists such as Thomas Gregor (who applies the term peace system), Buell Quain, Emilienne Ireland, and Robert Carneiro suggests that a combination of social mechanisms is important.

Creating an overarching social identity has just been mentioned. We humans use identity to divide, but less acknowledged is our ability to evoke identity for solidarity. Through profiting from inter-village

Why should killing by one relative species, chimpanzees, be considered so relevant for explaining human actions, while the other cousins’ peaceful practices [the bonobos] be dismissed as irrelevant?

Western society that humans are warlike by nature or naturally inclined to kill.

A recent example of this perspective is Steven Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, in which he asserts that the evolutionary past as well as more recent tribal periods of prehistory were plagued by “chronic raiding and feuding that characterized life in a state of nature.”

Such statements slander those Indigenous peoples that are peaceful and are contradicted by the existence of peace systems.

To consider another example, in the Upper Xingu River basin area of Brazil, 10 neighboring tribes representing four language groups live without making war on each other. The cultures still hold dear their particular tribal identities but also have added an overarching level of social identification of themselves as one people who assemble to feast, trade, inaugurate new chiefs, and mourn the passing of former chiefs.

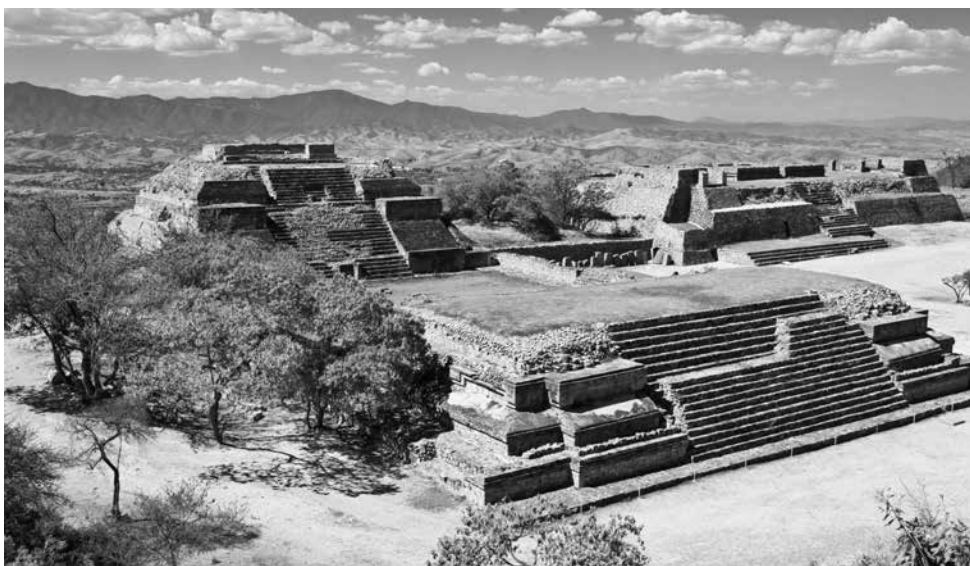
Such collective ceremonial gatherings also provide an occasion for wrestling, a sport upon which these peoples thrive. Instead of holding rigidly to “us versus them” mentalities, the 10 Upper Xingu tribes have expanded the “us” identity to also include the “them,” as members of a larger, peaceful social system.

A critical question about the Xingu

trade, practicing intermarriage, and participating in common ceremonies and rituals, the Upper Xingu peoples put a common identity into the service of peace.

Reinforcing antiwar values also comes into play. The Xingu tribes in the past have taken up the spear to defend themselves from tribes outside their peace system who have attacked them, so they are not total pacifists but, at the same time, their social values are distinctly antiwar. Emilienne Ireland points out how they view aggression as a pathetic mark of failed leadership and self-control. Blood itself is viewed as vile and disgusting. They draw contrasts between themselves as civilized, because they do not condone war, and the violent tribes that reside outside the peace systems. For the Upper Xingu tribes, peace is moral and war is immoral. Thomas Gregor expresses it thus: “The good citizen is therefore peaceful in response to both the moral imperative of peace and the aesthetics of behavior.”

In some quarters, the term “values” has become a dirty word. As an anthropologist concerned with peace, I have come to realize that values—as principles that guide one’s life—are critically important. Values can promote peace or to the contrary support militarism. There is no shortage of ethnographically described



Oaxaca, Mexico: Monte Alban ruins of the Zapotec civilization.

warlike cultures that instill in each new generation the martial values of fortitude, courage and violence, such as among the equestrian plains cultures of North America.

At the same time ethnographic cases are bountiful—from the Paliyan of India or the Hopi and Saukteaux of North America to the La Paz Zapotec of Mexico, with whom I've worked—that promote in central place values of respect, humility, and nonviolence. From a cross-cultural perspective, about half of the societies in a large worldwide comparative sample allow and value revenge in response to violence, whereas the other half of societies do not condone the “eye for an eye” mentality.

In short, values matter: The value system can be employed in the interest of peace.

Another anthropological jewel for peace activists is the amassed evidence that there has not always been war, and by extension that there need not always be war.

A large number of people see war as just part and parcel of human nature. However, in addition to the existence of non-warring societies and peace systems, other kinds of anthropological and archaeological evidence contradict such a view.

How old is warfare? Does it extend back over many, many millennia? Or is war a rather recent chapter in humanity's biography?

We can answer questions about the an-



Chimpanzee (left) Bonobo (right)

tiquity of war via archaeology directly and, by analogy, by looking at the oldest form of human society, nomadic forager bands.

Worldwide, the oldest unambiguous archaeological evidence for warfare falls within the last 10,000 years, with one site called Jebel Sahaba in Nubia and its less-than-clear indications of warfare being slightly older.

The chronicle of world prehistory shows that warfare originated in different places at different times, but always recently—after, as archaeologist Jonathan Haas points out, the global population had increased to the point where groups started settling down to live in one place.

The archaeological sequences show transitions from conditions of warlessness to war at different locations at different times and also how war became more common and destructive with the origin of the state 4,000 to 6,000 years ago.

For instance, on the northwest coast of North America, in the Valley of Oaxaca in Mexico, in the Anasazi region of the south-

western United States, and in the southern Levant in the Near East, prehistoric time sequences show shifts regarding war and peace at the same locations over time.

Aside from the archaeological evidence showing multiple origins of warfare after the agricultural revolution began, and the proliferation of warfare with the rise of archaic states, nomadic forager studies support the veracity of the warless evolutionary history of humanity.

Prior to about 12,500 years ago, the nomadic forager lifeway was ubiquitous.

If the purpose is to gain insights through analogy about the peacefulness or warlikeness of human societies over the course of human evolution, then the most appropriate type of extant society to consider is nomadic forager social organization. Researchers who have worked with nomadic foragers usually report that warfare is absent or rudimentarily developed in nomadic forager societies.

In 2009, there was a data raid on anthropology by a member of the Bellicose School. U.S. economist Samuel Bowles self-selected eight societies to estimate war mortality in the long expanse of human prehistory called the Pleistocene, which extends backward in time until about two million years ago.

There are many problems with the Bowles study, but one obvious and serious one is that an accurate estimate of war deaths in the deep past of the Pleistocene cannot be

obtained by self-selecting eight atypical societies—this is by data “cherry picking.”

Recently, in an article published in *Science*, Patrik Söderberg and I took another look at nomadic foragers and our systematically sampled findings contradict those of Bowles' self-selected ones.

We note various features of nomadic forager social organization that all work against the practice of war at this archaic level of social organization.

Nomadic forager group size tends to be too small to support warfare. Additionally, the actual group membership changes regularly, and given therefore that a person will have relatives and friends spread out across various bands, this discourages war. Furthermore, nomadic forager societies tend not to be segmented into subgroups such as patrilineages that would form natural units for fighting.

Nomadic forager societies are egalitarian and consequently, with a lack of social hierarchy and leadership positions, nobody has the authority to command



A 19th century Ute family. A council of Ute chiefs presented a woman with a special antelope shinbone insignia in recognition of her interventionary peacemaking between Comanches and Ute. Photo: Library of Congress via Wikimedia

others to fight a war. Material possessions or caches of food are lacking, so there is nothing to plunder, and the nomadic lifestyle makes the capture and containment of individuals against their will (for example, slaves or brides) impractical and, in fact, extremely rarely reported in reality.

Based on such observations, Söderberg and I predicted that most cases of lethal violence in such societies would derive from interpersonal, not intergroup, disputes. This prediction goes against Bowles' assertions that there was a great deal of war in the deep past as well as the highly popularized chimpanzee model proposed by primatologist Richard Wrangham, who has suggested that chimpanzees and humans share an evolved tendency to attack members of neighboring groups if the risks are low to the attackers.

As a side note, one major difficulty with the chimpanzee model is the existence of bonobos, another species of apes just as closely related to humans as are chimpanzees, but who never have been observed to raid neighboring groups or to kill members of their own species under any circumstances.

The key question sidestepped by the chimpanzee model is: Why should killing by one relative species, chimpanzees, be considered so relevant for explaining human actions, while the other cousins' peaceful practices be dismissed as irrelevant?

We decided to take a look nearer to home, at humans, that is, and consider what nomadic forager behavior suggests about war and peace.

We therefore investigated all instances of killing for a systematically derived sample of 21 nomadic forager band societies. To avoid the potential problem of sampling bias (cherry picking), rather than self-selecting the societies, we instead derived the research sample based on ratings of previous researchers.

For all the cases of lethal aggression in this sample of societies, over half of the killings were committed by individuals acting alone, rather than by the type of coalitions of males hypothesized under the chimpanzee model.

Furthermore, in almost two-thirds of

the cases, the reasons for lethal aggression had nothing to do with attacking members of other groups, but were inter-familial disputes, within-group executions, accidents, and various interpersonal situations, as when two men fought over a particular woman. A third of the killings (36%) occurred close to home and involved, as perpetrators and victims, father and son, brothers, mother and child, in-laws, husbands and wives, companions, and neighbors.

Such killings are not warfare by any stretch of the definition.

Overall, in contradiction to the chimpanzee model, we concluded that, in nomadic forager societies, most cases of lethal aggression fit the definition of homicide; a few other cases could be classified as feud; and only a minority are war.

The proposal that “foragers have a tendency to attack neighboring groups when the risks are low” was simply not supported by these findings.

Peaceful Societies

Another point to make explicit is the cross-cultural variation in aggression apparent even in a sample of 21 societies.

At the violent extreme, one society, the Tiwi of Australia, accounted for almost half of the lethal incidences. At the other extreme, three societies lacked any such incidences. The other societies had variable amounts of lethal violence.

Roughly half of the societies, 10 out of 21, had no cases wherein more than one killer acted to commit a crime together.

So even though homicides occur in most of these societies, they take place more regularly in some cultures than in others.

The Semang of Malaysia were one of the three societies with no reported killings, and a subgroup of the Semang called the Batek have been extensively studied by the anthropological team of Karin and Kirk Endicott.

The Batek illustrate how it is possible to raise children, generation after generation, to become nonviolent adults. The Batek use blow guns to fire poisoned darts at prey animals. These weapons could also kill human

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Seville Statement on Violence



Can war be abolished? Is it a custom or is it intrinsic to human nature? These questions are of great importance today, because there is no task more important on the historical agenda of our times than the abolition of this age-old custom that has become so destructive that it threatens the very life of the planet. As Sigmund Freud wrote to Albert Einstein in their famous correspondence of 1932 on this subject, “These two factors—man’s cultural disposition and well-founded fear of the form that future wars will take—may serve to put an end to war ... but by what ways or byways this will come about, we cannot guess.”

Studies among various populations have found that about half of all young people believe that war is intrinsic to human nature (Granberg, 1975; Eckhardt,

1972; Wahlstrom, 1985; Adams and Bosch, 1987). And one study has shown that those who believe that war is part of human nature are less likely than others to take any action in favor of peace (Adams and Bosch, 1987).

In 1986, 20 leading scientists from around the world examined the relevant scientific data and issued a statement that the evidence does not show that war is part of human nature. Paraphrasing the UNESCO Constitution and the words of the anthropologist Margaret Mead, they concluded, “Just as ‘wars begin in the minds of men,’ peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.”

Adopted in Seville, Spain, May 16,

1986, and adopted by UNESCO Nov. 16, 1989:

Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war; recognizing that science is a human cultural product which cannot be definitive or all-encompassing; and gratefully acknowledging the support of the authorities of Seville and representatives of the Spanish UNESCO; we, the undersigned scholars from around the world and from relevant sciences, have met and arrived at the following Statement on Violence. In it, we challenge a number of alleged biological findings that have been used, even by some in our disciplines, to justify violence and war.

Just as ‘wars begin in the minds of men,’ peace also begins in our minds.

Because the alleged findings have contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism in our time, we submit that the open, considered rejection of these mis-statements can contribute significantly to the International Year of Peace. Misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new but has been made since the advent of modern science. For example, the theory of evolution has been used to justify not only war, but also genocide, colonialism, and suppression of the weak.

We state our position in the form of five propositions. We are aware that there are many other issues about violence and war that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war

from our animal ancestors. Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intra-species fighting between organized groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intra-species violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals.

The fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language which makes possible the co-ordination of groups, the transmission of technology, and the use of tools. War is biologically possible, but it is not inevitable, as evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space. There are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature. While genes are involved at all levels of nervous system function, they provide a developmental potential that can be actualized only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment. While individuals vary in their predispositions to be affected by their experience, it is the interaction between their genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance that determines their personalities.

Except for rare pathologies, the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence. Neither do they determine the opposite. While genes are co-involved in establishing our behavioral capacities, they do not by themselves specify the outcome.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior ...

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War and Nature

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beings. The absolute strength of the Batek prohibition against using violence is illustrated by the shocked response of a Batek man to Kirk Endicott’s question: “Why didn’t Batek in the past use their blow pipes and poison darts against slave raiders?” He answered: “Because it would kill them!”

Another interesting feature of Batek society is gender egalitarianism. The Endicotts catch this idea in the title of their very readable 2008 book, *The Headman Was a Woman*.

Anthropology provides fascinating insights into the myriad ways that people keep the peace and, in those cases where the peace has been broken, into the paths that people take to reconcile and restore their damaged relationships. Third parties often intervene, sometimes in dramatic ways.

In their fields near the Nile, two Nubian brothers argued regularly about how to share the irrigation water. Anthropologist Robert Fernea relates how one day their uncle overheard the shouting. He found a

flat stone and placed it in the middle of the irrigation ditch, where offshoots of water went to each man’s land, thus dividing the irrigation flow equally. This was the end of the argument.

Robert Carneiro relates another tale of successful third party intervention, this time at the intergroup level, which took place in the 1600s in South America. The Yao people were on friendly terms with the Caribs and Aricoures and feared a bloodbath might take place between them, so they intervened and convinced both groups to cease hostilities.

In a dramatic display, the Caribs threw their weapons of war to the ground and ran to embrace the war-party of the Aricoures. The peacemaking Yao then hosted both groups of reconciled enemies in their village for over a week to cement the peace agreement by providing both food and a venue for amicable social interaction.

The importance of the third party as peacemaker is reflected once again in an account by E Adamson Hoebel involving the Comanches and Utes of the North American plains.

A Ute woman who some years before

had been captured by the Comanches, and had borne a son, was now a member of the group that was engaged in battle with the Utes. The mother feared for the life of her son, one of the Comanche braves.

She mounted a horse and rode between the two groups of combatants, holding up her hand and insisting that they stop fighting. Delivering a speech, the woman explained that she was on both sides of this conflict for she was a Ute and her son was Comanche. She told all present that the fighting should cease, and after some discussion the two sides made peace.

In recognition of her brave act of peacemaking, a council of Ute chiefs later presented the woman with a special antelope shinbone insignia affixed to her tipi.

A cross-cultural perspective shows that humans in fact deal with nearly all their conflicts without using any physical aggression, both between individuals and between groups.

Obviously human beings have the potential to make war and to act with violence towards others, but humans also have a strong potential for getting along and solving disputes without violence.

From one culture to the next, people may argue and discuss, or simply ignore and tolerate a conflict. They may also appeal to third parties as mediators, arbitrators or judges, or the third parties themselves may take it upon themselves to act as peacemakers as in the Nubian, Yao, and Ute examples.

In conclusion, anthropology provides good news to peace scholars and activists.

It is possible to create societies with very low levels of violence. It is also possible to construct and nurture peace systems. Both archaeological and nomadic forager studies support the view that war is a rather recent invention, arising under particular circumstances. Humans deal with most of their conflicts without the use of violence.

As a species facing many common threats to our survival, we can draw upon these abilities to work together to achieve peace and security in the 21st century and beyond.

Douglas P. Fry, PhD, is professor and chairperson at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He is the author of Beyond War: The Human Potential for Peace and, most recently, the editor of War, Peace, and Human Nature.

Seville Statement

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ior more than for other kinds of behavior. In all well-studied species, status within the group is achieved by the ability to cooperate and to fulfill social functions relevant to the structure of that group.

“Dominance” involves social bindings and affiliations; it is not simply a matter of the possession and use of superior physical power, although it does involve aggressive behaviors. Where genetic selection for aggressive behavior has been artificially instituted in animals, it has rapidly succeeded in producing hyper-aggressive individuals; this indicates that aggression was not maximally selected under natural conditions. When such experimentally created hyper-aggressive animals are present in a social group, they either disrupt its social structure or are driven out. Violence is neither in our evolutionary legacy nor in our genes.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a “violent brain.” While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by “instinct” or any single motivation. The emergence of modern warfare has been a journey from the primacy of emotional and motivational factors, sometimes called “instincts,” to the primacy of cognitive factors. Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism, social skills such as language, and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in the general population. As a result of this exaggeration, such traits are often mistaken to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as “wars begin in the minds of men,” peace also begins in our minds.

The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

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S.A. Barnett, Ethology, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
N.P. Bechtereva, Neurophysiology, Institute for Experimental Medicine



U.S. military opens a space force unit in South Korea.

A Peculiar Form of American Madness

Heroification of the military is a strange mindset for any self-avowed democracy

By William Astore

America is touched by a peculiar form of collective madness that sees military action as creative rather than destructive, desirable rather than deplorable, and constitutive to democracy rather than corrosive to it.

This madness, this hubris, this elevation or heroification of the military and war has to end, or it will most certainly end America, if not the world.

America ... sustains a historical narrative based on triumphalism, exceptionalism, and goodness.

We Americans see total military dominance as something to crow about, even as we insist that it's our birthright as 'exceptional' Americans.

Related to this, America advances and sustains a historical narrative based on triumphalism, exceptionalism, and goodness. We Americans see total military dominance as something to crow about, even as we insist that it's our birthright as “exceptional” Americans. This mindset, or Zeitgeist if you will, enables and empowers a national security state that easily consumes more than half of federal discretionary spending each year. As long

as this mindset persists, the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex or Military-Industrial-Counter-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think Tank (MICIMATT) Complex will persist and continue to grow in reach and power.

So that's my first big step in taming the MICIMATT complex. America's mindset, its culture, must change. Change the mindset and you begin to change the deference if not adulation granted to the MICIMATT.

Change the mindset, weaken the blob. That was what Dwight D. Eisenhower had in mind in his “Cross of Iron” speech in 1953. Our peculiar form of militarized madness is simply no way of life at all for democracy or for the planet.

It won't be easy because we're taught to salute the military and support “our” beloved troops. We're taught that corporations like Boeing and Raytheon are job-creators, even citizens. We look to

to think tanks for fresh approaches even as they're funded by weapons contractors.

Under these conditions, it's not surprising that the United States no longer sees peace as possible or even as desirable. Peace is rarely mentioned by U.S. political candidates or by the mainstream media. War is simply taken for granted; even worse, it's seen as the health of the state.

That war is now seen as the health of the state is indeed a peculiar form of American madness. As we enter the new year, is it too much to ask for sanity as in peace on earth and good will toward all?

Ike's “Cross of Iron” speech in 1953 was brilliant in its clarity and power. Can you imagine any U.S. politician saying these words today?

“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.

“This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete pavement. We pay for a single fighter with a half-million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. ...

“This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

William J. Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF). He taught history for 15 years at military and civilian schools. He writes at Bracing Views.

Trailing Clouds of Glory

By Denny Riley

Wordsworth wrote “Trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home / Heaven lies about us in our infancy.”

Hordes of people will reject his lines because they include the capitalized word God, even though Wordsworth wrote in the England of the early 1800s when a belief in God was almost taken for granted. Perhaps if he wrote today, he would express the same phenomenon differently.

But to his poetically presented suggestion that a baby is born trailing clouds of glory, in the womb a fertilized egg passes through stages that include developing arms and legs that twitch and kick. The mind develops in the womb also, and here lies the question. Was the fetus mind twitching with thought? If so, was it thinking of the earthly life to come? Or was it born with an inkling of the world it came from, a world none of us now remember. Wordsworth suggests we could have recalled the moment of birth, the anteroom of human life, if the world we were born into expected us to remember.

Assuming we do arrive here trailing clouds of glory, is anyone who arrived here before us looking for those clouds when a baby is born? Is anyone looking for any indication that an intellect unknown to those already here has arrived? No. From the beginning being alive is about adapting to this mortal world where dying is treated as a tragedy.

We are born and not long after we learn to talk, to count, to spell words. Who would say this teaching is ill-informed, except it is only preparation for being a member of an obviously dysfunctional species, the species that developed the nuclear weapon and the delivery system to use it.

A simpler life, one that would leave us generally ignored, asks submittal to an education that trains us to be productive bread winners. Normalcy is the instruction but always dangled before us is the possibility of fabulously wealthy, fame and power. Spiritual beliefs are codified and defined and manifested in ritual and dress. Stone structures, whether European cathedrals or Central American temples, are treated as sacred. We whisper when we enter them. We bless ourselves in the local parlance. When our religious beliefs are adopted by our rulers, we go to war against people of different beliefs.

Europeans came to North America and found a vast continent occupied by people with a multitude of beliefs, and they went to war against them, treated their religions as heathen, stole every bit of their land, and taught the Indian Wars to school kids as defensive.

Europeans stole people from their African homes,

brought them here and sold them to work for nothing other than making white men rich, and treated their beliefs as heathen. In 1860, Mississippi was the richest state in America because of cotton production and slave labor.

Rich people donate money to build libraries, laboratories, and arts centers. Donated money is but a shard of most donors' wealth and is almost always tax deductible. It's money left over from what they believe is essential. What is essential expands outward in zealous imitation of those who have the most, people who have such an excess of wealth that possessions are acquired simply because they can be acquired and acquired simply to show you have the means to acquire them. No exaggeration is too gross in depicting this.

Jane Austen called these acquisitions “The apparatus of happiness.” A purchasing power that compels purchasing. Now that I'm rich I should buy expensive junk. A desert condominium on a sunbaked golf course where members are driven in shaded carts over recently watered green fairways to take swipes at small white balls, hoping to land one near a slightly larger hole. And huge wall-mounted televisions so the golfers can be watched while comfy on a couch, the golfer's swipes at balls interspersed with advertisements for expensive vehicles marketed as though they will take you on a harrowing adventure to civilization's edge, when in fact every component of the vehicle is a polluter. And previews for movies of violence passed off as entertainment.

And there are ski lodges and yachts and luxuries that almost always accrue to people who start with an advan-

tage of race or religion or tribe, although every one of them will tell you they earned what they have.

At the other end, which is called dying or passing on, they may learn the old saw is true. You can't take it with you. People in their last moments have been witnessed calling out to friends or loved ones who went before and are in the end seen on the other side. Not having died I cannot explain it to you or attest to its veracity. Maybe gathering wealth is why we're put on the planet. Maybe I belittle it because I haven't achieved it. Yet I've read about very wealthy people who live dreadful lives, beautiful movie stars who put it all up their noses. People who go out in a flare when it appeared they owned the future.

It's impossible to say what life and death is for another person. They may not know either. Lorraine Hansberry wrote, “You never know the hills and valleys of another man's soul.”

One dark night as I was walking up Fulton Street from a bartending job, my pocket stuffed with tips, I walked by an alley and saw a scruffy man making a bed out of a cardboard box.

“Hey,” I called.

“Hey,” he called back and walked toward me smiling like the host of the party.

“How ya doing?” I asked.

“Oh, pretty good,” he told me. “Pretty good.”

I gave him a five-dollar bill. He thanked me, did a little bow like it was a joke, and shuffled back down the alley.

Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of the U.S. war in Viet Nam, a writer, and a member of San Francisco Veterans For Peace Chapter 69.

Making Peace By Denise Levertov

A voice from the dark called out,
'The poets must give us
imagination of peace, to oust the intense, familiar
imagination of disaster. Peace, not only
the absence of war.'

But peace, like a poem,
is not there ahead of itself,
can't be imagined before it is made,
can't be known except
in the words of its making,
grammar of justice,
syntax of mutual aid.
A feeling towards it,
dimly sensing a rhythm, is all we have
until we begin to utter its metaphors,
learning them as we speak.

A line of peace might appear
if we restructured the sentence our lives are making,
revoked its reaffirmation of profit and power,
questioned our needs, allowed
long pauses ...

A cadence of peace might balance its weight
on that different fulcrum; peace, a presence,
an energy field more intense than war,
might pulse then,
stanza by stanza into the world,
each act of living
one of its words, each word
a vibration of light—facets
of the forming crystal.

“Making Peace” from *Breathing the Water*.