



VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWS

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VETERANS FOR PEACE, CHAPTER 27

Veterans For Peace News is published quarterly by Mpls./St. Paul Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27.

Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain our government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, end the arms race, reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, seek justice for veterans and victims of war, and abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

We pledge to use democratic and non-violent means to achieve our purpose.

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"There won't be any trumpets blowing come the Judgement Day — on the bloody morning after, one tin soldier rides away..."
(Potter & Lambert)



With the continuing non-response to Covid-19 from the Trump administration, the national convention went virtual this summer. Despite that, it still featured great speakers on important topics delivered in a compelling fashion. This year's convention featured guest speaker and newest advisory member, Jane Fonda (left).

National convention goes virtual, featuring special guest Jane Fonda

by Barry Riesch

Because of the epidemic, VFP put the gears in motion to hold its first online convention. I would say it was a rousing success, and our national staff deserve a strong round of applause. Our new executive director Garrett Reppenhagen, on his own this year, showed how totally competent he is to run this organization. Also our new board President Adrienne Kinne showed how amazing she is letting her light shine, especially during these challenging times. We are blessed to have them both, as well as our amazing office staff, Shelly, Colleen, Samantha, Casey and Gail, without whom this convention would not have been possible.

This year's convention, titled "Human Rights over Nuclear Might," focused primarily on the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In order to

make it easier for attendees to fit all the events into their daily schedules, the virtual convention stretched from Aug. 2 to 9, 2020. While past conventions found it hard to stick to the theme, this year it did a great job. There were a variety of plenaries and workshops, of course, but they were pretty well on track. Of the 15 workshops presented, four focused on nuclear issues, including the opening Plenary.

On the 75th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a live streaming remembrance was hosted by Kevin Martin, president of Peace Action. The ceremony was led by Reverend Elizabeth Theoharis, co-chair of the "Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival," and featured Masako Wada, who was a young girl in Nagasaki and had survived the bombing. She is now the Assistant Secretary General of Nihon

Convention, Continued on page 5

The Prez says. . .

by Michael McDonald

What a mess this country is in. On so many fronts we have to make changes that must be made for our very existence. From the pandemic to climate change to BLM, the list goes on and on.

Paul Wellstone said, "We all do better, when we all do better." He meant everyone.

We write, and we show up and we protest. What else do we do? We vote of course, but that's only a start.

I view what's happened in Portland as absurd that our government would react in this way. They don't minimize violence; they exacerbate it.

Hope springs eternal, but it doesn't look good right now. I hope we survive the next few months and turn a page on



this nightmare. Peace and stay safe everyone.

Peace Bus Travels

The bus has been all over Minnesota gathering anti-nuclear signatures in the past year. Lately it has been seen locally at many different locations. It's regularly seen in the Longfellow neighborhood at Craig and Dave's home.

We've brought it to White Bear Lake several Mondays to aid the regular protest there headed up by Tom Larson, Tom Chisholm, Nancy Chisholm, and Jim Mengel. We brought handouts from the National Environmental Costs of War, to share at rallies at the governors mansion. If you know of a spot with high visibility to bring it to, let us know. Roll on!

It's only 100 miles

by Larry Johnson

I registered in August for the National Legion Commander's 100 Mile Walk for Hope. The Commander suggests at least a mile every day till Nov. 11, which I do anyway, so I decided on four symbolic 20-22 mile hikes, reflecting the number of veterans who take their own lives each day. My entry on the site, (legiontown.org/node/6697) ends with: "My grandfather was a WWI veteran and Legion member. I am horrified that a major reason for starting the Legion was to fight for benefits veterans were promised. That should not be a need."

The \$30 registration fee supports a Legion fund providing help to disabled veterans and children losing soldier parents to war. Ultimately my walk is in support of Veteran Resilience Project (VRP), www.resiliencemn.org, the fight to make EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) trauma therapy available to all veterans in Minnesota. Without trying to, VRP pushed the VA to add at least one EMDR therapist to all VA Centers nationwide, and for many contemplating suicide, EMDR is better than other

forms more generally available. It helps in the aftermath of military sexual assault, as well as for domestic violence induced by military trauma. I also believe that untreated trauma is at the core of current concerns about peace activists not always acting in that spirit of love.

As you read this, I will already have done a Sept. 11 walk from my home to the Bloomington clinic where I have received EMDR. Passing my childhood home, I ended at the Mall of America, site of the farm turned baseball stadium, where I started my 1961 Fifty Mile Hike. 9/11 conjures up the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, leading us into Iraq. Presidential candidates now commonly say invading Iraq was wrong. During the Vietnam War such statements got you labelled a traitor; truly "The times they are a changing." I walked for a new image, celebrating O. Henry's 9/11 birthday. His LAST LEAF tells of a young artist ready to give up and die, until an older artist, redeeming a life and talent wasted by alcohol, restored her will to live with his final masterpiece. I walked also for THE

100 miles, Continued on page 4

The National VFP Perspective

by Dave Logsdon

"We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war, but the positive affirmation of peace."

Martin Luther King

Every once in a while I crank up my hearing aids and actually hear important stuff! A few years ago I picked up a habit from former Executive Director of Veterans For Peace, Michael McPherson, to always capitalize the "FOR" in Veterans For Peace. A small thing for sure, but it serves as a reminder while "raging against the machine" of that which we strive to attain in VFP.

After an intense roller coaster of a National VFP Convention, we all needed a non-virtual day off to reflect. Our historic first virtual convention was quite a ride with workshops, films, plenaries, chat rooms, music, poetry, and the amazingly intimate Zoom experience. Our young Executive Director, Garrett Repenhagen, and the office staff in St. Louis were tested putting this virtual convention together for the first time, and they passed with flying colors!

Kudos also go out to President Adrienne Kinney for navigating treacherous waters involving the expulsion of Tarak Kauff (former board member and editor of the now defunct Peace in our Times). Her 11th hour compromise that allowed member Kauff to remain with the organization in a non-leadership capacity demonstrated true leadership abilities. She's taken more than her fair share of abuse from all sides in this compromise, but thankfully, she stayed the

course. VFP is very lucky to have this younger vet at the helm. Hopefully, we can now get on with the business of making peace, speaking truth to power, and being a force for good in this world.



Building Our VFP Brand

Since my appointment to Vice-President of the Board of Directors, I've expanded on my work to reach out to VFP chapters around the country. Utilizing Zoom, I've been all over the map!

Unfortunately, I am finding out that Chapter 27's success is the outlier when it comes to VFP chapters. What is needed is a dynamic approach to using all the tools in the toolbox, to leverage our wonderful logo and our well crafted statement of purpose to increase the awareness of the costs of war and continue to look for opportunities to change this pervasive military paradigm in this country to one of peace.

As Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world, it's the only thing that ever has."

We have terrific leadership in place, a very hard working staff, and a lot of thoughtful VFP members, both Veteran and Associate members, and much to do. We need to dream big, step out of our comfort zones, and get to work! At this point you're probably saying, "Put down your pom poms big shot, and tell us how you plan to get this done"!

Actual Ideas that Might Just Work!

In a perfect world there should be photos of a couple ideas that have exploded out of my head in this crazy Covid-

National Perspective, Continued on page 4

100 miles, from page 2

BRANDON ACT, demanding that all mental health care for veterans be totally confidential. This is required in VRP and private EMDR care, but are AWOL in military systems. Lack of confidentiality is a major factor deterring veterans from reaching out for care.

On Sept. 21, International Peace Day, I walked to the homeless encampment near the Lake Harriet Bandshell, then to the Peace Garden for a noon meditation at the SPIRIT OF PEACE statue. My focus was for veterans to find their own inner peace, and for leaders to have the courage to negotiate conflict internationally without going to war. The U.S. needs no more homeless veterans. The world needs no more homeless refugees from war torn countries.

I will walk Oct. 14 to the 11 a.m. live show on the Minneapolis Children's Hospital TV channel. Drafted the minute I got a University broadcast degree, I was privileged to start that program (childrensmnstarstudio.org/our-history/) when I was done as an army medic. Dr. Ron Glasser,

a past pediatrician at Children's, wrote the bestseller, 365 Days, about being drafted as a doctor and treating soldiers from Vietnam. More recently he wrote BROKEN BODIES, SHATTERED MINDS, about veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. From Children's, I will walk to the 3 p.m. "Save Our VA" vigil, led by Jeff Roy and Arlys Herem.

Then on Nov. 4th, I will hike to St. Paul's Como Park for a 2 p.m. meditational walk for peace in the heart, then in the family, the community, and finally in the world. From there I will walk to the corner of Larpentour and Arcade, where I started the 61 mile hike on to Highway 61 when I turned 61. That walk called for less war, and for an end to obfuscated care for veterans in the areas of mental health and chemical toxin exposure.

Sixty-one stories about those issues became Larry Johnson's book SIXTY-ONE, available at www.shipwreckt-books.press.

National Perspective, from page 2

19 times. These ideas are meant to be replicated across the country and beyond.

The first is having a Little Free Library in your front yard. I have the prototype pictured here. Note the VFP stickers on the sides. Fill them with powerful anti-Imperialist books and wonderful publications like the one you are reading now. We have some amazing writers in our chapter, so let's showcase them. You can weed out the Tom Clancy and Danielle Steele novels because it's your library! You can

either go to LittleFreeLibrary.org or make your own!

My other wacky idea is the Instant Art Car Kit! Do you want to catch people's attention sometimes, but you don't want to paint your brand new Prius? The Instant Art Car is just the ticket. You just peel the magnetic stickers off when want to be inconspicuous and when you want to make a splash (think festivals, parades, etc) you just slap them on your car!

VFP artist Eric Garcia and I have been working on the pictured prototype along with John Condon at US Magnetix. We plan to tweak it, add to it, and export the concept to chapters worldwide.

And on a final note, there are many small and not so small things you can do to create the change we desperately need in the world today. Obviously, voting is one, but you can voice your disapproval (or approval) to your elected officials, write letters to the editor, show up at one of the many demonstrations, marches, and vigils with your VFP gear. Leverage yourself, leverage VFP!

Will it save the world? We won't know unless we try. I'll leave you with quote from the late great Robin Williams: "You are only given a spark of madness, you mustn't lose it."

WORLD BEYOND WAR

VFP members Leah Bolger, Bruce Gagnon, and Paul Chappell are among the impressive International Speakers Bureau, headed up by David Swanson.

**It is worth CHECKING out and
SUPPORTING this bureau.
www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/**

Convention, from page 1

Hidankyo, the Japanese organization of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Our keynote speaker this year was Dahr Jamail. In late 2003, weary of the overall failure of the U.S. media to accurately report on the realities of the war in Iraq for the Iraqi people, Dahr Jamail went to the Middle East to report on the war himself, where he has spent more than one year in Iraq as one of only a few independent U.S. journalists in the country. He has also reported extensively on veterans' resistance against U.S. foreign policy and is now focusing on anthropogenic climate disruption and the environment.

A particular highlight of the convention was our guest speaker and newest advisory member, Jane Fonda. A two-time Academy Award-winning actress, author & activist, Jane led a workshop "Connecting Movements Through Veteran Activism" along with our VFP Exec. Director Garrett Reppenhagen and Krystall Two Bulls, Director of Landback Campaign at NDN Collective. The discussion focused on how veterans can use unique military training in a new era of activism and how the credibility granted veterans can be used to make the movement accessible to more people and grow real opposition to imperialism and militarism.

With space being limited to list all the plenaries and workshops, keep an eye on National VFP website (veteransforpeace.org) for opportunities throughout the year to view them. Along with focusing on nuclear weapons and nuclear colonialism, we addressed broader topics, like what decolonizing the peace movement and Veterans For Peace looks like. We need to work on racial justice, not only in the country but within our organization. We need to end white

supremacy not just in the streets, but in our own chapter meetings and in our broader organization.

Another highlight of the convention for me has always been the "Poetry and Song Soiree." We do have some amazing writers and musicians in this organization. We were also able to hear from our younger members who contribute to "Stand Down," providing us with up-to-date spoken word. While there was no dancing, we did have a session of "Open Mic Night: Songs of Human Rights & Social Justice."

While I missed talking in person to fellow members and making those annual connections, the convention did allow making connections through chat rooms, discussion rooms and the Social room. Being online also made it easier for Veterans For Peace to broaden its audience by reducing costs and making the convention accessible. There were many new faces for me outside of those I usually see at the national conventions. The last count I heard of those registered was 430 participants.

The annual business meeting, which is the main purpose of the

convention, was probably the best attended to date. Being free and open to all members, I heard that 200 participants attended the meeting and remained strongly focused on it. This is different from past conventions, because in person, members tend to get up and socialize rather than fully participate in the meeting. With the great work of Garrett, Adrienne and another group of 12 members that were able to put some closure on an open wounds within our organization that will hopefully allow us to heal individually and as an organization. I sensed a huge amount of relief with this news.



Are “Soft Landings” Possible?

by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer

I published *Authentic Hope* in 2012. The book’s subtitle, “It’s the End of the World as We Know It, but Soft Landings Are Possible,” conveyed my conviction that it was possible to improve quality of life for present and future generations while transitioning from militarized empire to decent global partner and while dramatically reducing our ecological footprints. I was asked to assess whether I believe soft landings are still possible.

In 2008 I sought the DFL Party endorsement for U.S. Senate. I emphasized urgency and possibility under the theme “most important decade” arguing that decisions made in the next few years likely would determine quality of life for present and future generations. I was a nobody in DFL politics who nearly won because people shared my sense of urgency, disgust with politics as usual, and belief that the period I called “The Great Revulsion” was fueling a progressive revival. Permanent warfare, climate change denial, money distorting politics, economic inequality and corporate malfeasance left people hungry for honest critiques, hopeful alternatives and bolder actions.

Barack Obama, a great messenger of hope, was unfortunately a centrist politician. Throughout his two terms, Democrats tweaked unjust systems that needed fundamental restructuring. Slight improvements were made in areas such as healthcare access and climate change, but inequalities and economic insecurities deepened, wars continued, carbon emissions increased, and military spending consumed more than half of the federal government’s discretionary budget. Obama and his cautious Party squandered unprecedented opportunities. Thomas Frank in his 2016 book, *Listen Liberal*, wrote about the 2008 election and its aftermath:

“It was the perfect opportunity for transformation....The public was prepared to back him in the most far-reaching reforms. History had dealt Barack Obama four aces. He could not lose. Yet that is pretty much what happened. [He] saved a bankrupt system that by all rights should have met its end. America came through an economic debacle... [but]

the system emerged largely unchanged. The predators resumed operations. Everything pretty much stayed the same.”

I wrote *Authentic Hope* during Obama’s first term because the “most important decade” was fast becoming a lost decade. Authentic hope’s opposite isn’t despair. It is inauthentic hope, which is little more than wishful thinking. Only an honest, painful confrontation with root causes offers possibilities for solutions which I described as “soft landings.” I examined causes and consequences of climate change, U.S. militarism, inequalities, distorted politics, economies divorced from ecology, and deeply flawed visions and values. I offered alternatives and outlined bold actions leading to creative solutions (soft landings).

Authentic hope’s opposite isn’t despair. It is inauthentic hope, which is little more than wishful thinking. Only an honest, painful confrontation with root causes offers possibilities for solutions which I described as “soft landings.”

Years have passed. So how do I assess our prospects for “soft landings” today? There is no denying that limited but important progress made during the “most important

decade” has been overshadowed by blunders, neglect, inadequate responses, and recent reversals. As a result, our situation today is more precarious, not less. The pace of climate change, for example, is accelerating. Nature doesn’t give us a pass for collective failures to act boldly. However, I continue to believe that “softer landings” are possible dependent as always on the quality and speed of the actions we take from this moment forward. Here are four things to keep in mind as we commit our lives to achieving softer landings.

First, our determined actions are always needed and always helpful. Softer landings are always better than harder ones.

Second, this election matters. Nationally the destructive Republican Party stands in the way of all necessary reforms. Under President Trump and his enablers, the Republican Party has nearly completed a transition to being the angry white person’s party, and approximately 40 percent of the country shares its lack of empathy, its meanness, and its disregard for science, future generations and the health of the planet. There is little possibility for “softer landings” without defeating Trump this November and

Soft landings, Continued next page

Soft landings, from previous page

unless Democrats learn from their failure to take advantage of opportunities presented by the prior “Great Revulsion” which allowed a racist demagogue to win the presidency. In Minnesota, meaningful changes depend on Democrats retaking the Minnesota Senate. (Contact me if you want information on five or six key races.)

Third, amidst the present pandemic there is a deep desire to return to “normal,” but normal is itself a prescription for multiple disasters. Normal is racist and classist. Normal leads to climate catastrophe. Normal is bumbling through imperial decline. Normal is bipartisan support for wasteful military spending. Normal accepts homelessness, inequality, mass incarceration, and voter suppression. In a global measure of peacefulness the United States ranks 121st, largely because excessive military spending is normal, profound inequalities are normal (The National Bureau of Economic Research reports that 90 percent of U.S. household wealth is held by the richest 20 percent with the richest one percent holding forty percent while 40 percent of U.S. households have less than 3/10ths of one percent), as is the fact that the United States ranks last or near last in almost every measure of social wellbeing compared to other developed nations.

Finally, on a hopeful note, I see encouraging signs that “softer landings” are still possible. Hope is not a ledger sheet of pros and cons. We embody hope in daily actions taken on behalf of justice for ourselves, others, and the earth itself. Climate change, Covid-19 and the police murder of George Floyd reveal clearly that both the emperor and the empire have no clothes. Millions of people throughout our country are rising up, not only to defeat Donald Trump, but to demand and work to fundamentally change social systems and structures in our nation, our communities, and our culture. The seeds of a movement of movements are being planted. I believe that this present moment, like the previous “Great Revulsion,” is filled with immense possibilities for personal and social transformations on which softer landings depend.

*Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer's most recent book is a political murder mystery, *Death and Deceit: The Murder of Raif Bagawi*.*

He can be reached at jacknelsonpallmeyer@gmail.com

Virtual fundraiser for Peace House

In this time of Covid-19, Peace House Community is open from noon-3 p.m. each weekday. Drinks and snacks are served in the parking lot and provide a space for community members to meet. Peace House Community, started by the late Sister Rose Tilleman, is celebrating 35 years of serving homeless and marginalized men, women, and children in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis! We will be holding a virtual fundraiser on Sat., Oct. 17th at 7 p.m. Privately funded and run mostly by volunteers, Peace House Community offers compassion, acceptance, socialization, and other necessary services.

Please visit our website, peacehousecommunity.org, or like us on Facebook, facebook.com/peacehousecommunity, to learn how you can make a difference. Matching funds have been pledged to help us meet our \$35,000 financial goal. Please join us for our anniversary event, which will include testimonials, community stories, and a raffle for great prizes, Saturday, October 17th at 7 p.m. via our website. Every \$35 will put your name into the drawing!

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(downstairs under the bike shop)

Mayday Books has been a significant supporter of Chapter 27 for many years.

The volunteer staff has provided help with mailings and has donated books for the use of our group. It's also a great place to drop in, have a cup of coffee and talk with whomever happens to be there. Find that book you have been looking for.

Hours: M-F noon to 7 p.m.,
Sat. noon to 6 p.m.

Charlie Bloss....Presente!

by Dave Logsdon

This summer the world has lost a lot of amazing people, and our chapter of Veterans For Peace lost one of our own amazing people, Charlie Bloss. Charlie was a conscientious objector in the 60's and proud associate member of VFP. He was a colleague and a dear friend. When someone passes on, there are many adulations and gratitudes that are uttered, and with Charlie the list is long and heartfelt.

Steve McKeown, one of the founding members of our chapter in the mid-eighties, had this to say about him.

"I first became acquainted with him when we both were arrested at the Honeywell demonstrations in the 80's, but didn't get to know him personally until he became involved with our chapter a dozen years ago. Besides his solid presence at our activities, he was a joy to be with. Once after an action in D.C., he and I were stranded at the Baltimore airport because of a big snowstorm. We were the only ones in a long corridor, and we ended up sleeping on the floor. We solved all the world's problems for sure. He truly engaged with life, and I'm sure glad he did with mine."

Larry Johnson, past president of our chapter, weighed in about Charlie as well. "Charlie was a rock, quiet but powerful. I once saw him taking abuse from an activist colleague. Charlie did not scream back. Like the Franciscan and CD counselor he was, Charlie's entire being said, "That's not okay, it hurts, but I'm going to love you into learning to love."

Mary McNellis had this to say about Charlie. "I first met Charlie seven years ago at the VFP convention in Madison. We both are Associate members of VFP, and we shared many moments through the years at demonstrations, monthly meetings, and other activities. I shall miss him like I miss Wayne Wittman. Both pacifist to their bones, both true to their faith, and both an inspiration."

SueAnn Martinson said, "I knew Charlie through the Honeywell and Alliant Tech protests. He was such a nice man and loyal peace activist. Always a very calming presence."

Longtime member Bruce Berry, said, "Yes...oh my, Charlie is really gone. Through my years knowing him....he always seemed to know something that came out of nowhere! I loved and still am inspired by him. Presente!"

During the time I served as president of the chapter, I was privy to seeing a lot of the quiet heroes in our group. Charlie was definitely a quiet hero. He would step up, like the time when we needed to come up with \$2,000 to reserve the chartered bus we took to the School of the Americas



protest at the gates of Fort Benning in Georgia. Within a week he raised the \$2,000 and I thought that was pretty impressive. What a network he must have, though I suspect the bulk of that money came out of his own pocket!

One of the best part of being in VFP is road-tripping with your comrades. The adventures and misadventures are such a great bonding experience, though half the time you wonder what the hell did we get into? Of all of my VFP road buddies, he was at the top of the list. When I would get us lost (which happened a lot), he would just go with the flow and eventually we would find our way with another tale to tell.

Charlie's widow, Irv, gave me some nice insights about him, including his wanting the two of them to get arrested at the SOA Watch in Columbus, GA, and risk getting sent to prison. Thankfully she prevailed, which their two small children were very thankful for as well. He met Irv after he left the priesthood in 1973. Charlie was a little too much of a romantic for the priesthood!

Because of Covid-19 there was a limited number of relatives at his funeral and his ashes ended up in St. Joan's Memorial garden where his name will be placed on the wall.

There is so much more, and there are so many stories. On May 15, 2021, there will be an opportunity to tell them at his Memorial service at St. Joan of Arc. "Presente Charlie, your spirit will help carry us in these troubled times."

America: running on empty

by Joan Johnson

I always appreciate hearing the perspectives of foreign news agencies, correspondents and other citizens. A Rolling Stone article entitled “The End of the American Era” is a compelling critique of our nation during this COVID-19 pandemic, written by Canadian anthropologist Wade Davis. As you may guess, he paints a pretty bleak picture of what is happening in our country. He begins by laying out the enormous challenges faced by all of the countries of the world during this unprecedented health crisis, “with workers and businesses everywhere facing a choice between economic and biological survival.”

The U.S. has been the nation with the largest COVID outbreak and number of deaths (181,000 deaths as of this writing). With a historical perspective, he describes why our government is not handling this crisis well. Since the 1940’s, its priorities have been misdirected toward extreme militarism; since 2001, we’ve spent \$6 trillion, coming at the expense of investment in infrastructure and in our citizens’ collective wellbeing. With over 800 military bases worldwide, we police the world, but we are crumbling from within. His list of reasons include our obsession with gun ownership and resulting gun violence; the lionizing of individualism over the collective wellbeing; work-vs-family priorities; fragmented family structures; the ever-widening wage gap; fear of socialized medicine; racial disparities and injustices; huge incarceration rates, especially for minorities; and the list goes on. Davis hits the nail on the head: “What every prosperous and successful democracy deems to be fundamental rights – universal health care, equal access to quality public education, a social safety net for the weak, elderly and infirmed – America dismisses as socialist indulgences, as if so many signs of weakness.”

I would add that it is mostly Republicans who have pushed for this heartless, soulless ideology, and are the ones who seek to dismantle everything good about America, such as Social Security, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act, and even the Postal Service.

Other industrialized nations have had the leadership and tools to weather the virus storm. Davis gives his own as an example: “Throughout the crisis, testing rates across Canada have been consistently five times that of the U.S.

On a per capita basis, Canada has suffered half the morbidity and mortality.”

They have done well, Davis explains, “because of our social contract, the bonds of community, the trust for each other and our institutions, our health care system in particular, with hospitals that cater to the medical needs of the collective, not the individual, and certainly not the private investor who views every hospital bed as if a rental property.”

He emphasizes that the response of Number 45 has most definitely made dealing with the pandemic far worse for Americans than it needed to be. “We are being led by a narcissistic buffoon” who first downplayed the seriousness of the virus, then touted an untested drug to combat it, later told us to inject disinfectants, and has mostly refused

to wear a mask or follow social distancing rules all along. He has weakened CDC guidelines to fit his own agenda (looking good and getting re-elected) and has made it politically incorrect to follow the advice of scientists and health care professionals.

His empty-headed, self-centered worshipers are equally culpable, first for electing him, then for following his example. Davis describes them well: “Those who flock to beaches, bars, and political rallies, putting their fellow citizens at risk, are not exercising freedom; they are displaying, as one commentator has noted, the weakness of a people who lack both the stoicism to endure the pandemic and the fortitude to defeat it. Leading their charge is Donald Trump, a bone spur warrior, a liar and a fraud, a grotesque caricature of a strong man.” They put at risk all who they come into contact with during and after the event.

But, that is not a concern of theirs. Their “freedoms” are front and center – even when those choices may result in the death of another. This is what DT and cohorts communicate with their actions and words every single day.

I want to end with a question that Davis asks: “How can the rest of the world expect America to lead on global threats – climate change, the extinction crisis, pandemics, when the country no longer has a sense of benign purpose, or collective well-being, even within its own national community? Flag-wrapped patriotism is no substitute for compassion; anger and hostility no match for love.” We can only hope and pray for new leadership in November. And VOTE!

Canada’s health care system caters to the medical needs of the collective, not the individual, and certainly not the private investor who views every hospital bed as if it is a rental property.

Baltimore Four; activist talks about social justice, his life and going through it with a disability

by Craig Wood

Although Veterans For Peace (VFP) member Jim Mengel recalls falling asleep in class, he didn't know he had narcolepsy until after he was married. At 92, he still dozes off occasionally, but that doesn't stop him from attending weekly VFP anti-war vigils in White Bear Lake.

Between boyish chuckles, the soft-spoken pastor remained humble throughout the interview. He was self-deprecating at times and usually deliberated questions at length before giving detailed explanations that sometimes digressed from the theme. It soon became apparent he took his faith in Jesus Christ very seriously and didn't want to be depicted as a hero in this story.

He grew up in Reading, Pennsylvania with the influence of the United Church of Christ. He loved playing baseball and later tennis and found part-time employment as a printer recalling the old-fashioned way of setting up type - one letter at a time.

His mother stayed home with three kids and his father had a job with the local water department. Mengel didn't think much about the difficulty he had with reading or his tendency to fall asleep in school. He did however, think a lot about the anguish his family felt after learning his uncle had been killed in France during WW2.

He graduated from Albright College in 1950 with a BS in Business using a learning system he invented that didn't include reading text books. Instead, he made sure he attended every class and sat up front so he could hear clearly and take detailed notes with a form of shorthand he devised. Sometimes he'd sit in the back so he could fall asleep and not disturb anyone. When he studied he generally focused on headlines, summaries, glossary words or what he could glean from indexes or pictures.

Right after college he joined the National Guard along with his brother and cousin at the onset of the Korean War. He stayed stateside and when he left the service he began thinking harder about what he called "the foolishness of seeking peace through the military." This sentiment grew stronger throughout his life. After his discharge he took a freighter to Africa and worked from 1952-54 as a missionary.

He met his wife later in Cleveland during a clinical

internship while he was enrolled in the Lancaster Theological Seminary. It wasn't long after the two were married that he and his wife who was a nurse discovered he had narcolepsy. "Winston Churchill, Harriet Tubman and Jimmy Kimmel had narcolepsy" Mengel mentioned.

The pills he took for narcolepsy didn't help much. Because of his medical condition, he could only hold a job for about seven months so his wife became the primary bread winner while he did more stay-home parenting. After taking another freighter across the ocean, the couple had their second child in Korea where Mengel worked from 1963-66 as a civilian pastor and missionary with street-children and orphans impacted by the Korean War.

It was a life-defining moment for him in 1966 when he met the late Josephite priest and anti-war activist Phil Berrigan who is remembered for his early work with disenfranchised Blacks along with his dedication to the 1960's peace movement. Mengel was particu-

larly impressed with Berrigan after he openly criticized the Catholic Church for not taking a tougher stance against warfare. He recalled the ire Berrigan received when he linked Black oppression with the disproportionate number of Blacks who were used as cannon fodder during the Vietnam War. "The Berrigans were saying things in church that needed to be said. They saw what was happening to Blacks, especially because of the war," said Mengel.

At that time, Mengel was traveling between Baltimore and Washington DC to attend anti-war demonstrations. On October 27, 1967 he was arrested with three others after they occupied the draft board office at the Customs House in Baltimore. During an act of civil disobedience, Phil Berrigan, artist Tom Lewis and writer/poet David Eberhardt combined the blood from all four activists with poultry blood and poured it over draft records. They hoped this symbolic and sacrificial ritual would bring more awareness to the Vietnam War. Mengel decided to forego the actual pouring of blood and passed out "Good News for Modern Man" (New Testament) paperbacks instead. The three others distributed Bibles and talked about the reasons for doing what they did with those nearby until the police arrived for



Baltimore Four, Continued next page

Facing the unspeakable

by Steve McKeown

At a talk in Dallas in 20 Nov. 2009, Jim Douglas, the author of one of the best books I have ever read titled "JFK and the Unspeakable; Why he was killed, and Why it Matters" covered 23 highlights, each several paragraphs long. Subjects included: Plausible Deniability, Truman Warns About the CIA, The National Security State, Saving the Planet is Treason, A Profound Source of Hope, JFK Alienates the CIA and the Military, Kennedy and Khrushchev, Two Enemies Become Peacemakers, Love Your Enemies, JFK's Next Bay of Pigs, The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, JFK Reaches Out to Cuba, JFK's Secret Order to Begin Withdrawal From Vietnam, JFK Reaches Out to The Third World, Kennedy's Proposal for A Joint U S Soviet Moon Landing, JFK Meets The Quakers, Feeding the Enemy, Rendezvous With Destiny, A Profile In Courage, Giving Thanks For a Peacemaker. The talk can be found by googling the book's title along with Dallas convention 2009.

Douglas borrowed the word "Unspeakable" from the Trappist monk and spiritual writer, Thomas Merton as "a void, an emptiness of meaning, an abyss of lies and decep-

tion,...a void that contradicts everything that is spoken even before the words are said, the void that gets into the language of public and official declarations at the very moment when they are pronounced, and makes them ring dead with the hollowness of the abyss." Trump talks about the Deep State, the petty nonsense about the media, the post office, the FDA, and anything that doesn't make him a profoundly historic leader. Kennedy took on the Deep State as so well

documented by Douglas. Kennedy and Khrushchev looked at the abyss they were taking us toward and backed away, then tried to take it away forever. Trump is leading us there again and he has his cheerleaders.

Kennedy signed a partial Test Ban Treaty, later made complete in the nineties. Trump talks of resuming nuclear testing, and while Kennedy and Khrushchev talked about complete and total disarmament, Trump has said he will never sign the U N Treaty to ban Nuclear Weapons, nevertheless over 100 people from WAMM and VFP chapter 27 have made a commitment to call our two Senators each month to get them to support the

Treaty. If they agree maybe they can tell Trump he would win the Nobel Peace Prize if he signs or if he loses maybe they can tell him anyway then his base won't be out to crucify us, and they can guard the abyss.



VFP member Jim Brown at his Mankato house. Jim also attends a weekly vigil at the Mankato post office.

Baltimore Four, from previous page

a peaceful arrest.

The group along with their efforts did make headlines and were tagged the Baltimore Four. Berrigan was sentenced to six years in a federal penitentiary and Eberhart and Lewis served additional jail time after the arrest. That didn't stop Berrigan from organizing or inspiring others to continue on with radical demonstrations, he'd been to jail before and would end up there again.

Mengel though, continued on with peace-and-justice work while avoiding jail in parishes or through community service. He moved to Minnesota about twenty years ago and still resides in White Bear Lake.

He emphasized numerous times he didn't want to be portrayed as a hero in this article, referring back to the importance of the legendary Martin Luther King Jr. and

Berrigan brothers. His admiration for his deceased wife Norma also surfaced frequently. He spoke of her lovingly and panegyrically as an amazing person who excelled in many things and contributed more to their lives together than he did. Going on to say if there's to be a hero in this write-up, it should be his wife, adding that men should be more appreciative and inclusive of women, especially the ones in their lives. Nevertheless, Mengel continues to show up Monday afternoons at the intersection of 4th Street and HWY#61 near downtown White Bear. He's there between three and four, shuffling back-and-forth along the sidewalk holding a sign with a message for peace, just like a trooper, not a hero.

An Assault on Human Dignity, the Rule of Law, and the Institutions That Would Uphold Them

by Mike Madden

The Organization of American States (OAS) was founded in 1948 for the “settlement of disagreements and disputes that may hereafter arise” between its members. All 35 independent states of the Americas have ratified the OAS Charter and are members, including the United States.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) is an organ of the OAS. In 2008, the IACHR received a petition and request for precautionary measures from the Center for Constitutional Rights to protect **Guantanamo prisoner Djamel Ameziane**. The petition alleged numerous violations of Mr. Ameziane’s rights by the United States.

Following strict protocol and notification of parties, the IACHR found that the petition fell within its purview and undertook an investigation in 2012. This resulted in a report that was published on April 22, 2020, upon which this article is based.

Mr. Ameziane is an Algerian national who was detained by local authorities in Pakistan in 2001 and transferred to U.S. custody, allegedly for bounty. He was initially held at Kandahar Air Base, Afghanistan before being transferred to Guantanamo Naval Base, Cuba in 2002. He alleges torture and other cruel treatment throughout his detention. After 11 years of arbitrary detention, he was forcibly repatriated to Algeria in 2013 despite credible threats to his well-being in that country. The United States **never** offered any evidence linking him to hostilities or terrorism, **nor** was he ever charged with a crime. He was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Mr. Ameziane described his inhumane treatment for the inquiry. His allegations of waterboarding, beatings, death threats, sleep deprivation, and solitary confinement contained specific details lending credibility to his account. They were also consistent with a report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, leaked in 2004, that found the detention regime at Guantanamo to be “an intentional system of cruel, unusual, and degrading treatment and a form of torture”.

The United States did not controvert the testimony of Mr. Ameziane, or otherwise address his allegations of inhumane treatment directly. Instead, it offered the Commission this demonstrably untrue platitude: “[a]ll US military detention operations conducted in connection with armed conflict, including at Guantanamo, are carried out in accor-

dance with international humanitarian law, including Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, and all other applicable international and domestic laws.”

The Commission considered a series of legal memoranda issued by the Office of Legal Counsel in 2002. Commonly known as the “torture memos”, they were written by John Yoo and Jay Bybee and authorized the very techniques applied to Mr. Ameziane while asserting that the President is not bound by customary international law, the Geneva Conventions, or the federal War Crimes Act in decisions concerning detention conditions of al Qaeda and Taliban prisoners.

On January 22, 2009, two days after President Obama’s inauguration, an executive order titled Ensuring Lawful Interrogations was issued. It stated that individuals detained in any armed conflict “shall in all circumstances be treated humanely and shall not be subjected to violence to life and person.” It further established Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions as the minimum baseline in this regard. The Commission properly interpreted this development as a reversal of the position held by the previous administration; that persons detained in the global war on terror were not, as claimed, afforded the Geneva Convention protections.

The report also found that Mr. Ameziane’s right to due process was violated. For six years beginning in January 2002, he had no meaningful avenue to challenge the legality of his detention.

While lower courts were generally deferential to the unique constructs of the Bush administration’s war on terror, including off-shore sequestration of detainees, the Supreme Court ruled in 2004 (*Rasul v. Bush*) that, contrary to executive policy, **Guantanamo prisoners did have a right to file writs of habeas corpus and challenge their detention in regular courts.**

In response, the Defense Department created Combatant Status Review Tribunals (CSRT’s). Intended as an alternative to habeas corpus, these tribunals were entirely secret. Their location was secret, the identity of the presiding officers was secret, and secret government evidence was presumed to be reliable and valid, including hearsay provided by anonymous sources. Detainees were denied counsel and informed before the hearing that they had already been found to be an enemy combatant at multiple

Human dignity, Continued next page

Human dignity, from previous page

levels of review.

Mr. Ameziane refused to participate because he believed the hearings “would not provide due process and would be used to justify his indefinite detention”.

Congress joined in the effort to circumvent the Rasul decision by passing the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005. It granted the government-friendly D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals exclusive jurisdiction to review the kangaroo CSRT decisions, as if that were a substitute for habeas corpus and direct access to the courts. It also granted civil and criminal immunity to government personnel who abused and tortured detainees pursuant to enhanced interrogation directives, a curious provision in a law ostensibly intended to protect detainees.

The Supreme Court ruled in June 2006 (*Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*) that the military commissions set up by the Bush administration were unconstitutional because they violated both the Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The majority found the military commissions were not “regularly constituted courts” as required, and protections afforded to prisoners were deficient, specifically citing the permitted use of statements obtained through torture.

Following the decision in *Hamdan*, Congress attempted another end-run around the court by passing the Military Commissions Act. It was signed into law on October 17, 2006, and added statutory authority to the military commissions, but it failed to adequately correct their procedural flaws. It further stripped the courts of habeas jurisdiction in all pending and future cases.

Boumediene v. Bush consolidated a number of these stayed habeas petitions and challenged all of the attempts to subvert the 2004 ruling in *Rasul v. Bush*. On July 12, 2008, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the detainees holding again that they have a right to habeas protection and that the alternatives concocted by the executive and legislative branches did not pass constitutional muster.

The injury here to Djamel Ameziane is apparent. For six years, justice was denied while he endured severe physical and psychological mistreatment. The government added insult to that injury by clearing him for transfer (October 2008) and successfully arguing in court that his habeas petition was therefore moot.

But that did not mean he was a free man. The United States did not make public his clearance, and it prohibited him from doing so. The rationale was that negotiations for the transfer of other cleared detainees would be harmed if individual detainees simultaneously pursued their own

resettlement. He would languish in the American gulag for another five years.

The IACHR addressed the notion of transfer rather than release:

Once a detainee has been cleared for transfer, the U.S. authorities have no basis to continue treating him as a suspected terrorist. Therefore, the cleared detainees should be housed separately from the rest of the prisoners, should have ample access to counsel and family members, and should not be subjected to the regime applicable to the rest of the prison population. Detainees cleared for transfer should be treated as persons who have never been charged—which is what they are—whom the authorities have no legitimate interest in detaining. The only reason they are still at Guantanamo is because they are waiting for a third country to receive them.

But there would be no effort to make amends for the wrongful detention and mistreatment of Mr. Ameziane. Instead, the United States worked purposefully to send him to the country he feared most—Algeria. He knew firsthand of the discrimination observant Muslims experience in his home country. He was aware of the stigma his status as a former Guantanamo prisoner would carry. His brother believed he “would be shot” if he returned. And, his interrogators had threatened to send him there to be tortured or killed if he did not cooperate.

The forcible return of a person to a country where they are likely to be persecuted is known as *refoulement*. The practice is prohibited under international law and is a violation of human rights.

The IACHR opposed Mr. Ameziane’s transfer to Algeria which came to pass on December 5, 2013. It was aware of Algeria’s poor human rights record, and that another Guantanamo transferee, Abdul Aziz Naji, had been sentenced to three years in prison following a one-hour summary trial for terrorism. It was also aware that offers of resettlement were pending from other countries including Canada and Luxembourg.

Mr. Ameziane was taken to Algeria on a military transport plane. His hands were shackled to his waist and his feet were chained to the floor. He was handled roughly and interrogated upon arrival, then thrown in jail where conditions were crowded and unsanitary. He was interrogated several more times in jail, and after five days he was

Human dignity, Continued next page

Human dignity from page 13

released on probation.

More than two years later, in May 2016, Mr. Ameziane was put on trial in Algeria. He faced terrorism charges and the prosecutor sought ten years imprisonment. While it was a harrowing experience, he was acquitted in a one-day trial.

The United States was less than cooperative with the IACHR in its investigation into Mr. Ameziane's refoulement. Rather than provide any specific information regarding an individualized evaluation that is required prior to transfer, it simply produced its non-refoulement policy and offered assurances that it had been followed. The report also concluded that Mr. Ameziane's right to property had been violated and recommended the simple remedy that it be returned. It is here that the United States most reveals its penchant for petulance and intransigence.

At the time of his initial arrest, the equivalent of approximately \$11,500 was seized from Mr. Ameziane. It is US government policy to retain all currency confiscated from Guantanamo detainees because it "remains possible that former detainees will use their returned money to help finance terrorist activities". Apparently, this blanket policy applies even to those wrongfully detained who never had ties to terrorism in the first place.

When Mr. Ameziane's lawyer brought a civil suit in US court to get his money back, the suit was dismissed. The court held that "[n]ot every violation of a right yields a remedy, even when that right is constitutional".

In all, the IACHR report found the United States responsible for thirteen violations of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, commonly known as the American Declaration. Its recommendations held remedies for both Mr. Ameziane and the 40 detainees

remaining at Guantanamo.

After failing to implement any of the Report's recommendations (the United States called them "non-binding"), the IACHR issued a Final Merits Report to which the United States has been entirely unresponsive.

One cannot help but contrast the US attitude toward this IACHR investigation with that of the OAS report alleging fraud in last year's election in Bolivia. Even though the election report has since been discredited, the United States was quick to trumpet its conclusion. The double standard is glaring. Washington embraces the findings of the OAS only when they serve its hegemonic interests, and no factual basis is required if the wrongdoing is attributed to an official adversary such as Evo Morales.

One must also bear in mind the recent U.S. threats issued to the International Criminal Court for investigating possible war crimes committed by the United States in Afghanistan. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the investigation "a breathtaking action by an unaccountable political institution masquerading as a legal body", and financial and travel sanctions have been leveled against ICC officials, including Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda. However, when the target of an ICC action is an official U.S. adversary, such as Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi or Congolese rebel leader Bosco Ntaganda, the United States is entirely supportive.

The plight of Djamel Ameziane brings home the disregard held by the U.S. government for individual human rights. The rule of law suffers when the self-proclaimed leader of the free world holds itself above it. And, it may ultimately prove injurious to the United States, whose primacy is slipping, to tear down international institutions dedicated to settling disputes, serving justice, and upholding the law.

HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST by Ibram X. Kendi

A book review by Paula Staff

Dr. Kendi charts his own evolution as a person with racist ideas, thoughts, feelings, and behavior to one who enacts antiracist beliefs, feelings and behaviors in his book. According to him, a racist idea "is any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another in any way. Racist ideas argue that the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequities in society." He adds, "An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. Antiracist ideas argue that racist policies are the cause of

racial inequities." He wrote of the great journey it was for him to make this shift over time. He challenges us, "What side of history will we stand on? A racist is someone who is supporting a racist policy by their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea. An antiracist is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy by their actions or expressing an antiracist idea." Dr. Kendi continues, "Racist ideas have defined our society since its beginning and can feel so natural and obvious as to be banal, but antiracist ideas remain difficult to comprehend, in part because they go against the

Antiracist, Continued next page

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

5-6 pm Weds. Lake Street/Marshal Ave. Peace Bridge vigil. (Beginning Nov. 1, 4:30-5:30 pm)

Monthly VFP chapter meeting, 2nd Sun., 6 pm. They are now virtual meetings. Contact VFP at 612-821-9141 for information on how to connect.

4:45 pm Weds., 50th and Halifax, Mpls. Grandmothers for Peace Vigil. (FFI call 612-927-7607)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept 18-27. DAYS OF NONVIOLENCE, Go to www.twincitiesnonviolent.org and plan to be a part of this effort, led by MAVERICK PRIEST, Father Harry Bury, aiming to become a massive peace and justice coalition, like the one after World War I, leading to the outlawry of war and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Oct. 17, 7 pm. Virtual fundraiser for Peace House Community. Started by Sister Rose, it is celebrating 35 years of serving homeless and marginalized men, women, and children in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis! FFI see article page 7

Antiracist, from previous page

flow of this country's history....to be an antiracist is a radical choice in the face of this history, requiring a radical reorientation of our consciousness." We are invited to choose a new way of thinking and behaving—a way that is not easy, but taps our strength and our willingness to engage in a different path with honesty and fortitude. It will likely be a course not unlike his, one that spans time and our courage to forge ahead despite obstacles within and without. When that day comes for me, I will be proud to wear the label of antiracist. I am not there yet, but on my way.

Political season

by Ron Staff

Well, we're in it now.

The season of political gaming moves many people away from news cycles. Most of the avoidance comes from relentless assaults on which history actually happened. As each "box orator" lays out solutions to problems, which had not been noticed, or claims credit for events, which got past one, the eyes glaze over.

It's the glazed over eyes which, in exhaustion, accept the latest spin. Our current fibber-in-chief" has been Johnny-on-the-spot" keeping folks safe his party reports. Meanwhile the opposition paints a picture of a different color.

Which world-view will win the day? "Zest" or "Life" or "Ivory" soap could be bought. Advertising money buys a lot of TV time to sell products. More over, digital options, local newspapers, radio sources and little neighborhood news papers could all take some cash, which might tide them over until the next voting game.

Self government hires it's leaders, gives them a shove, then watches to see what happens. In a monarchy the lone ruler always wonders what the people really think and wanting to keep them in awe of their power kill individuals. Capital punishment, it's called. What's so capital about it? If an individual does it, it's considered the worst crime imaginable. How come a government doing it is any better? A single homicide is terrible; while a mountain of them is a war.

An empire rules. Self-governing organizations attempt to govern themselves. The empire rules "others," who have no say in the rules. Human citizens do well to keep an eye on what their corporate citizens (with no headstones in Arlington) are selling with their reduced-tax dollars.

Capital punishment removes all punishment, ends a life (which some try to lighten up by noting it as not innocent). While the culture war on women's health with the "right to life" energizes true believers. Odd.

In the news cycle, listening without filters can bring in wonder at the ability of clear speaking adults to fool themselves. "Fibber McGee and Molly" echoes in elder minds, puts on a smile, measuring the hokum in what is spoken.

Enjoy. While it lasts.



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SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of Sep. 12, 2020:

At least 7,035 dead in Iraq and Afghanistan;
over one million injured veterans.

An estimated 22 veterans die from suicide each day,
amounting to over 24,090 over the past three years.



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