



# a MATTER of SPIRIT

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## Transforming Creation through Nonviolent Resistance

by Scott Wright

We live in a world radiant with beauty and one that is also crying out for redemption. The entire Creation is filled with the colors of the seasons of Creation, at the same time it is groaning under the impact of climate change: extreme weather events, devastating floods and severe droughts, rising sea levels and melting glaciers, disappearing habitats and disappearing species of life. But this drama is not confined to the impact of climate change alone. Transnational mining companies, oil pipelines and hydroelectric dams that provide electricity for their mining ventures, are ravishing the lands and polluting the waters, and Indigenous communities across the Americas are making a

stand to protect Creation.

History is filled with inspiring examples of nonviolent resistance, from Gandhi's independence struggle in India, to Martin Luther King's struggle for civil rights and Cesar Chavez's struggle for farmworker justice in the United States.

But something new is happening here. The stakes—the fate of the Earth and future generation—are higher and the protagonists are new, with Indigenous communities and women playing a crucial role, and the spirituality of nonviolence is deeper and more holistic—rooted in the gift of Creation.

Pope Francis pointed to these emerging “signs of the time” when he adopted the name Francis, and pointed to what would become his



Berta Cáceres with Fr. Ismael Moreno, SJ

commitment to poor and Indigenous peoples, to peace and nonviolence, and to protecting all of Creation.

One of the more remarkable nonviolent struggles in recent years came to light when a young Indigenous leader and mother of four children was assassinated in La Esperanza, Honduras. On the night of March 2, 2016, Honduran environmental and Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres was brutally murdered in her home. As co-founder of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), Berta had led the Lenca people and other Indigenous communities in a non-violent struggle for the integrity of their territories and their sovereignty.

For years, Berta and the Lenca communities courageously fought to block the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project which would create a series of dams, flood large areas of land, and cut off the supply of water, food and medicine to the Lenca peoples. In addition, this project violated the sovereignty and the rights of Indigenous people to decide whether such mega-projects would be undertaken at all. Berta was persecuted and received numerous death threats



Church and Mining Network held in Bogota, Colombia in September 2016.

for her work to defend the sacred rivers, forests and lands from further desecration. Since the military coup in Honduras in 2009, more than 150 land and environmental activists have been assassinated, and hundreds of mining concessions have been offered to transnational mining companies, many of them tied to hydroelectric dams to generate the electricity required by their operations.

had on the Church and on the world, but there are many more. Three years ago, the Catholic Church in Latin America formed the Church and Mining Network to defend the Indigenous peoples and the natural resources of the continent. In like manner, the Pan-Amazonic Church Network (REPAM) was formed to defend the Amazon region and has since spread to the Congo Basin in Africa and to Asia as well.

cious capitalism, racism, and patriarchy that will only assure our own self-destruction. The Gualcarque River has called upon us, as have other gravely threatened rivers. We must answer their call. Our Mother Earth—militarized, fenced-in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systematically violated—demands that we take action. Let us build societies that are able to coexist in a dignified way, in a way that protects life.”

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*Let us wake up! Let us wake up, humanity! We're out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism, and patriarchy that will only assure our own self-destruction.*

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What does this mean, then, for the future of Berta's people, and the future of her land? Is nonviolent resistance an effective means to create peace, democracy and sustainability? Surely the Lenca people have been faithful to their Indigenous values and spirituality, rooted in a reverence for Creation. Surely they have and continue to pay a high cost. They have been faithful yet people often ask, have they been effective? Does their nonviolent resistance offer any hope? I would answer “Yes,” and here are three reasons why.

First, because the stakes are so high, and the fate of the Earth and of future generations hang in the balance, the witness of Berta Cáceres and the nonviolent resistance of the Lenca community has had a profound impact throughout the world. This is due, in part, because Berta was so well known. She was the recipient of the Goldman Prize for environmental activists, and a personal invitee of Pope Francis to the World Meeting of Popular Movements in Rome in 2015.

A case could be made that Berta was a *Laudato Si'* martyr in a long line of martyrs defending the Earth. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* is just one sign of the impact that Indigenous communities defending Creation has

Second, nonviolent resistance is effective and hopeful because people are listening to Indigenous peoples and to women as the protectors of the land and the water, and waking up to hear “the cry of the Earth” and the “cry of the poor.” Berta, the Lenca people and countless Indigenous peoples around the world are the first defenders and the last protectors of Creation. If we don't listen to them, the future is dismal. But people are listening, and beginning to take seriously the fate of the planet and the fate of present and future generations. Many have had, thanks to social media, the good fortune to hear Berta's voice.

At the 2015 Goldman Prize awards ceremony in San Francisco, Berta spoke briefly and eloquently. For me, her words evoked memories of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “I've Been to the Mountaintop” speech and Archbishop Oscar Romero's “In the name of God, stop the repression” homily, both given on the eve of their assassinations and martyrdoms. Like them, Berta sealed her fate with words of hope and defiance in her acceptance speech that night:

“Let us wake up! Let us wake up, humanity! We're out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious

A new spirituality of nonviolence is emerging, one that is deeply tied to the fate of the Earth and the gift of Creation, and that is a third reason why the nonviolent resistance of Indigenous communities like the Lenca people protecting Creation is effective and hopeful. We can see that closer to home, in the gathering of Native Americans at Standing Rock, North Dakota. We know, if we do not listen and respond with solidarity, the fate not only of Native Americans but of the lands and waters of our native land are at stake.

Our spiritual traditions are deeply enriched by the spirituality of Indigenous peoples rooted in the gift of Creation. As Christians, we know that the joy of Easter is the victory of Christ over death, and that life, not death, will have the last word. But even as we anticipate and eventually celebrate the joy of Easter, the passion of Earth and the passion of the poor continue in the drama of these nonviolent struggles of Indigenous peoples for life and for all of Creation. In this “in-between” time, it truly is “a matter of the Spirit,” and we pray to the Spirit that unites us all and binds us to Creation: “Come Holy Spirit, and renew the face of Earth.”

▲ *Scott Wright is the director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (CCAO), the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation office of the U.S. region of the Missionary Society of St. Columban. He was the co-coordinator of the Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA) and a friend of Berta Cáceres since 1999 when she served on the board.*

# Courage and Commitment to End Gun Violence

by Judy Byron, OP

“Gun sales boom on Black Friday,” read the CNN Money headline.<sup>1</sup> On this biggest day of the year for gun sales, shoppers weren’t buying guns for Christmas gifts, they were taking advantage of big discounts for themselves. This was happening in a country where it is estimated that there are almost more guns than people, over 50,000 incidents of gun violence were reported in 2016 and on average 106 Americans die by gun violence each day, including suicides, homicides and accidental shootings.<sup>2</sup>

Do these high rates of gun violence have to be inevitable? A growing number of public health experts, people of faith, gun owners, state and city governments and citizens say no, there are policy options if gun rights advocates and gun control advocates can meet on this issue that is often polarizing. What could be possible if each group approached gun violence in the spirit called for by Pope Francis: “[with] neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict...but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.” Together we could strive to understand the crisis we face, realize that we share the goal of saving lives and agree on solutions that address gun violence.

In the US the right to bear arms for recreation, self-protection and work is a cherished part of our American heritage. However, because guns can be used to injure and kill they pose a serious threat to the safety and health

of the American public. Prominent gun violence experts are calling for a public health approach “to advance a comprehensive set of strategies that includes: much more data and studies on gun violence as well as policy change, design modifications to guns and conveniences of a wide range of collaborators... It will take time, but just as with smoking, cultural norms around firearms will change.”<sup>3</sup>

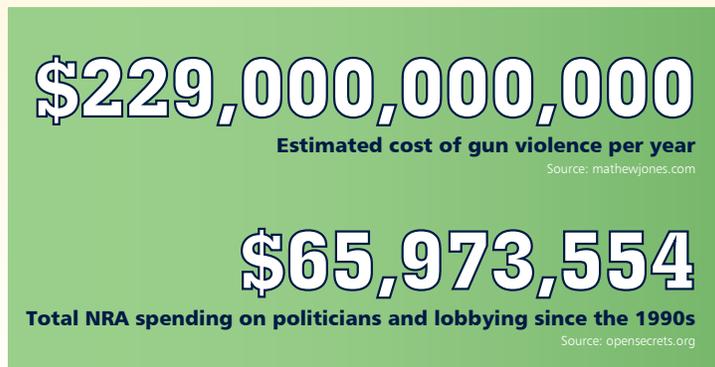
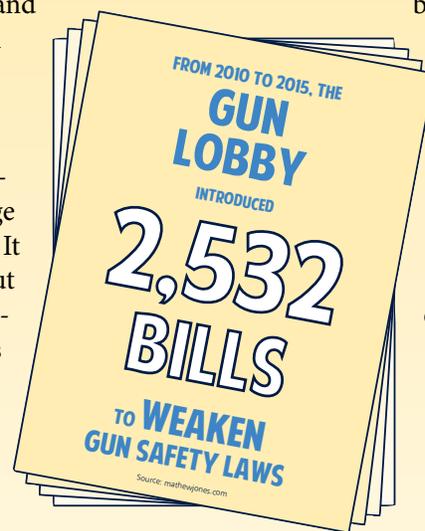
Respecting the Second Amendment and the common good, and hearing Pope Francis’ call for encounter and dialogue, investors made the decision to address gun violence with manufac-

turers and retailers. Over a dozen Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) members, including Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment (NWCRI) shareholders, have each purchased a minimum number of shares in gun manufacturers, Sturm Ruger and Smith & Wesson, and gun retailer, Dick’s Sporting Goods. We bought stock in these companies not for financial returns but to challenge the companies to examine their role in the epidemic of gun violence in our country. In addition investors already held stock in retailers Kroger, Vista Outdoor and Walmart.

While most faith based investors have had a policy against owning gun stocks, we have not been silent on the issue of gun violence.

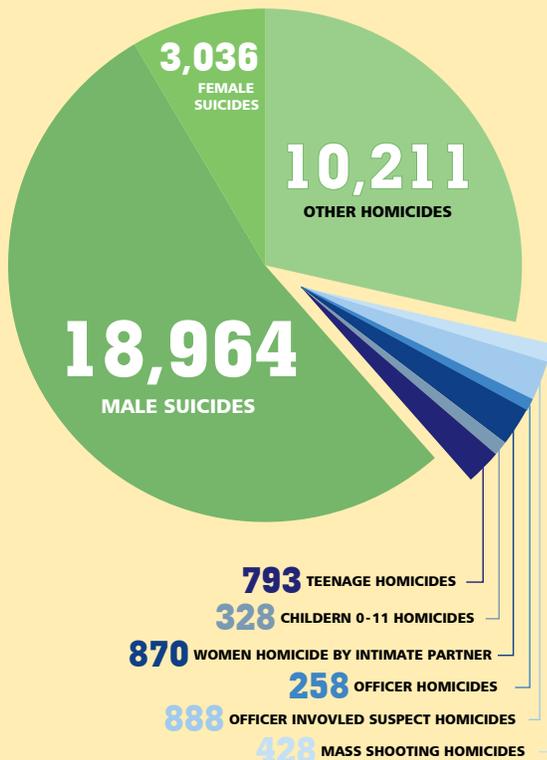
In 2013 we supported Starbucks request that customers not bring firearms into its stores. A year after Newtown an ICCR colleague pressed Amazon to review its sales of firearms accessories that could be used to convert semi-automatic rifles into weapons that fire too rapidly to be legal. In 2016 this same colleague filed a shareholder resolution with Kroger requesting that the Company ban the sale of automatic weapons and accessories at all of its owned

and operated stores. Approximately one-third of Kroger’s Fred Meyer stores sell firearms, including semi-automatic rifles and handguns. Unfortunately the Securities Exchange Commission al-



turers and retailers. Over a dozen Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) members, including Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment (NWCRI) shareholders,

## Firearm Involved Deaths in 2016



Statistics as of December 5, 2016  
Sources: [gunviolencearchive.org](http://gunviolencearchive.org) & [fivethirtyeight.com](http://fivethirtyeight.com)

*While most faith based investors have had a policy against owning gun stocks we have not been silent on the issue of gun violence.*

including payments to trade associations such as the NRA. While the social and economic factors that contribute to the rate of gun violence in communities are many and complex, there is a growing body of research that correlates certain strong gun laws and lower rates of gun violence.<sup>4</sup>

Investors will also ask manufacturers and retailers to report on the steps they have taken to implement the elements of the Sandy Hook Principles. The US Conference of Mayors developed

out of the hands of children, people with mental illness and criminals; support background checks on all gun and ammunition sales; reevaluate policies regarding the production or sale of military style assault weapons; commit to develop and implement technology enhanced safety measures for guns and ammunition; and promote gun safety education at the point of sale.<sup>5</sup>

To the question we began with, “Do these high rates of gun violence have to be inevitable?” Garen J. Wintemute, a renowned expert on the public health crisis of gun violence poses a question to us. He says, “Look at it this way. There are more than 400,000 people buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Each of those people made a great sacrifice, whether they died in combat or not. At current rates, we will fill another Arlington-sized cemetery with civilians who will die from firearm violence in 13 years. The question we need to answer is: “Do we have the courage and commitment to mobilize and take action against firearm violence?”<sup>6</sup>

▲ **Judy Byron, OP** is the Program Director of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center and the Coordinator of the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment.

lowed Kroger to omit the resolution from its proxy.

A critical issue that shareholders will challenge gun manufacturers and retailers on in 2017 is their support of the National Rifle Association (NRA), which since the 1990s has spent over \$65 million on politicians and lobbying to weaken gun safety laws. Top donors to the NRA include Sturm Ruger and Smith & Wesson. A typical shareholder lobbying proposal asks the company to disclose all of its political spending,

these Principles in remembrance of the 20 children and 6 adults who lost their lives on December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School and all those who have died by gun violence. The Principles call on the gun industry “to be part of the solution to the public health challenges we face in cities and towns across the nation.”

Among the actions outlined in the Sandy Hook Principles for companies who make and sell guns are to develop and implement policies that: keep guns

**Cry out as if you had a million voices,  
it is silence that kills.**

— *Catherine of Siena*

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Aaron. “Gun Sales Boom on Black Friday.” <http://money.cnn.com>.

<sup>2</sup> “Gun Violence Archive 2016.” <http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Newbergh, Carolyn. “Gun Violence Is ‘A Problem We Don’t Need to Have’ – The Public Health Approach.” <http://www.phi.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> Parsons, Chelsea, and Eugenio Weigand. *America Under Fire*. Center for American Progress.

<sup>5</sup> Sandy Hook Principles. Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Mayors.

<sup>6</sup> Thacker, Paul D. “Gun Myths Die Hard.” [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com).

# Movement from Just War to Just Peace

by Marie Dennis

Colombia claimed the attention of people around the world as it inched toward a peace agreement after 50 years of war. Even the “no” vote in the October 2016 referendum failed to derail a process that was grounded in the determination of a nation exhausted by war and nourished by a long effort to move beyond violence and to build a just peace.

In April 2016, 85 people from around the world gathered for a conference in Rome on nonviolence and just peace, invited by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Pax Christi International and other Catholic organizations. Many of the participants came from countries like Colombia that have been at war or dealing with serious violence for decades: South Sudan, the Philippines, the DR Congo, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uganda, Burundi, South Africa, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Having described the difficulties, even danger, of persistent, active nonviolence, Colombian Jesuit Francisco DeRoux wrote about the deep desire for peace in the communities he serves:

*Two years ago we organized a meeting with about thirty thousand people coming from conflict zones in the whole of the country. Small farmers, campesinos, native people, afrocolombians. They were the families whose youngsters had joined the guerrilla groups, the paramilitary groups and the army. And all these people stood there asking and claiming: “Stop the war, stop the war now, and stop the war from all sides!”*

His account was one of many powerful testimonies during the Rome conference that highlighted the yearning for just peace, especially in war zones, and amazing persistence in the pursuit of peace even in the most difficult circumstances.

The focus of those gathered in Rome was on active nonviolence as a way of life, a positive and powerful force for social change, and a process for ending violence without violence, transforming conflict and protecting the vulnerable. Participants shared stunning examples of effective peacebuilding in South Sudan, Northern Uganda, the Philippines, Colombia and elsewhere.

Archbishop Jean Baptiste Odama from Northern Uganda, for example, spoke about ending 23 years of war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the government of Uganda:

*Human beings want to be listened to; they want to be loved; they want to be trusted... We started to promote that sense of trusting the government, the rebels. And we became like a bridge, linking them... The process of our negotiations took about two years. And in the end, the two sides disarmed themselves in our region, particularly in the northern part of Uganda. The rebels put down their arms, the government put down their arms*

*and they decided to agree not to continue the war in Uganda...*

Participants in the Rome conference reflected on the centrality of nonviolence to Jesus' life and teaching, recalling in their outcome document, “An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to the Centrality of Active Nonviolence,” that *In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new, nonviolent order rooted in the unconditional love of God. Jesus called his disciples to love their enemies... (Matthew 5:44); to offer*

*no violent resistance to one who does evil (Matthew 5:39); to become peacemakers; to forgive and repent; and to be abundantly merciful (Matthew 5-7). Jesus embodied nonviolence by actively resisting systemic dehumanization ...*

They agreed to try to move the conversation about war and peace in the Catholic Church from just war to just peace by developing a deeper understanding of and commitment to nonviolence.

While ethical criteria are necessary for addressing serious threats in a violent world, they called the Church to give less attention to the “just war theory,” which is well ensconced in international law. They maintained that the language and concept of a “just war” has become a major obstacle to developing nonviolent tools and capacity for preventing violence, protecting vulnerable communities, transforming structures of violence, and promoting sustainable peace.

At the same time, “just peace,” as it is being developed by scholars and practitioners of peace, is an excellent example



of a nonviolent moral framework that can help us navigate challenging ethical questions in a violent world. A set of practices for building peace at all stages of acute conflict, just peace draws on three key approaches—principles and

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*Just peace is not only the absence of violence but the presence of social, economic, and political conditions ...*

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moral criteria, practical norms, and virtue ethics. Just peace is not only the absence of violence but the presence of social, economic, and political conditions that sustain peace and human flourishing and prevent conflicts from turning violent. Just peace can help Christians move beyond war.

To more deeply explore what could be a major shift in Catholic theology on war and peace, conference participants asked Pope Francis to write an encyclical

on nonviolence and just peace. They asked the institutional Church to integrate Gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the Church and to focus not on the “just war theory” but on the

development of nonviolent tools that can help the world move into the future on a different path.

Obviously, the conference is not

the end but an important step in an ongoing conversation that will hopefully engage the whole Catholic community through The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project of Pax Christi International, which emerged from the conference.

In a very positive development, Pope Francis approved a proposal from the conference to write his World Peace Day 2017 message on the theme of Nonviolence: A Style

of Actions for Peace.

**Take action:** Endorse the Appeal from the Rome conference at [www.nonviolencejustpeace.net](http://www.nonviolencejustpeace.net). Promote attention to the World Day of Peace message on nonviolence, using resources available on that site, including background documents and reflections prepared for the conference, resources on nonviolence and just peace, webinars on the conference and its outcome, frequently asked questions, prayers and discussion questions.

▲ *Marie Dennis is Co-president of Pax Christi International. She worked for the Maryknoll Missioners from almost 25 years, ultimately as director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, and was a prime organizer of the April 2016 Rome conference on Nonviolence and Just Peace, which called on Pope Francis to write an encyclical on nonviolence and on the Catholic Church world wide to recommit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence.*

## Eye in the Sky Film Reflection

The film *Eye in the Sky* is a glimpse into the difficult decisions that must be made when engaging in modern warfare. We've all heard the various arguments for and against using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), more commonly referred to as “drones,” for military combat. One side of the argument is that they keep our servicemen and women safe from on-the-ground violence and are invaluable for surveillance. Another is that there is a huge disconnect between those that “pull the trigger” and their “targets.” This film focuses on the moral implications of the collateral damage that often occurs while carrying out drone strikes.

There is no one setting for this tumultuous film. Instead, it follows world leaders, military officials, and politicians from around the world as they decide whether or not to “eliminate” an enemy target in Nairobi, Kenya who is suspected of planning a massive attack that could kill thousands. Things get complicated, however, when a young girl begins selling her mother's bread within the parameters of the target. The moral question is hotly de-

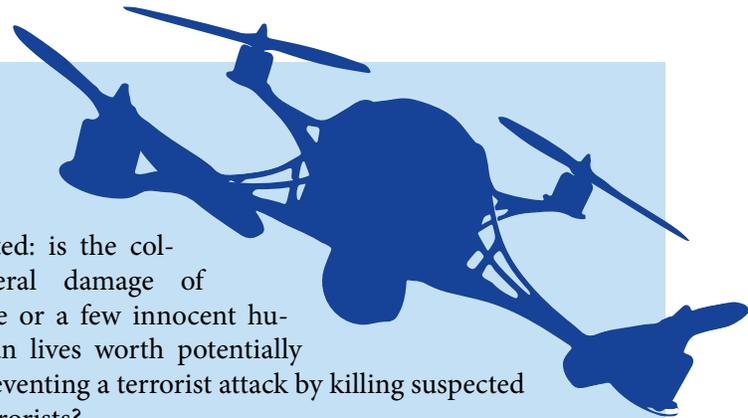
bated: is the collateral damage of one or a few innocent human lives worth potentially preventing a terrorist attack by killing suspected terrorists?

As peacemakers, we know that every human life is sacred, and that the cycle of violence traps us in an endless war. We encourage you to watch *Eye in the Sky* with your family, friends, or faith community. Then discuss these questions:

- What would I have done in that situation?
- Pick one of the characters. How did the outcome of the situation affect them?

Contact IPJC to borrow a copy of *Eye in the Sky*.

For more information about the issue of drones, check out the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) backgrounder: <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/understanding-drones-43>.



# Creating Peace:

## Jesuit Cultural Center in Egypt



Discussion groups gather at a JCC event.

by Sami Creta

ALEXANDRIA—Five years have passed since the Egyptian revolution, and many questions are still without answers and many wounds without healing. Beyond the political and economic problems, hopelessness characterizes the huge population of young people in Egypt. However, many young people have a different vision of how to surpass this turbulent time with a cultural artistic scene that plays an essential role as a refuge and a path for those who are still searching for values and meaning.

The Jesuit Cultural Center of Alexandria (JCC) is an independent non-profit institution founded by the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Its main purpose is human formation of those (especially the youth) who are willing to contribute positively to the human development of society with all the challenges of modern culture. The Center is offering a broad range of programs with artistic, intellectual and cultural activities that concern the well-balanced de-

velopment of the whole human person. This program expresses the respect and belief in the common value of every human person and promotes the values of beauty, citizenship responsibility, equality and justice without any religious, social, political or gender segregation.

### Creating dialogue through art

From the deep belief that art can be a strong common base for humankind, surpassing all ideological limits, the JCC's programs open doors for people from different backgrounds and beliefs. Using visual arts, cinema, theater and music to create new paths of coexistence in Egyptian society, we discover the inner beauty in each of us during this time when there exists a lack of understanding and violence. Art and beauty can take us from solid ideologies into common understanding based on inner human identity.

The center went outside its walls to extend some events to reach the international community. It organizes activities

and workshops that contain local and international participants, playing a very important role in the peace building process. Meeting people from different cultures and seeing examples of coexistence experienced in other geographical places has opened the doors for hope.

Discovering that there are other people that share the same values of peace and beauty has given the youth of Alexandria the strength and openness to continue this journey. This is what happened last year after the JCC hosted 60 young people from Europe and the Middle East for a five day forum about a culture of peace. A strong relationship was built between the youth from around the world through artistic programs in interactive theater, music, visual arts and dance workshops. Living, eating, thinking and playing together created an environment of peaceful and healthy dialogue between youth with different points of view.

“People of today and tomorrow need this enthusiasm [of wonder] if they are to meet and master the crucial challenges which stand before us. Thanks to this enthusiasm, humanity, every time it loses its way, will be able to lift itself up and set out again on the right path. In this sense it has been said with profound insight that “beauty will save the world” (John Paul II, from the letter to artists, 1999).

▲ Sami Creta graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts Sculpture Department in 2008. He then received a scholarship to study Foundations and Perspectives for a Culture of Unity at Sophia University in Italy. Upon his return, he joined the Jesuit cultural center in Alexandria as Program Officer.



Youth from around the world gathered at the JCC event, “Culture and Art for Youth Rights, Unity and Solidarity.”

# A Culture of Violence

## Affects Our Well-Being



### A Culture of Violence: Where We Are Now?

by Rita Kowats

**W**e live under a cloud of negativity, in a violent culture which does too much too fast. We are losing our ability to live in our own presence, the presence of others and the presence of the divine. We must begin the journey back to peace: live consciously, practice empathy and be One.

“I see you,” “Namaste,” “Shalom,” are familiar greetings. If we mean them we are truly present but expectations in the workplace have become inhuman and we don’t know what it’s like to live a balanced life anymore. We talk all day, come home and talk some more. Because we don’t want to miss out on anything we also pack our social calendars.

“I see you.” How can we truly see one another when there is no interior space with which to reflect? Violence in relationships ensues which causes violence to one’s own psyche and body, which translates to violence in our local and global relationships.

I believe that the most significant consequence of this behavior pattern is a loss of self-reflection. Without the will, skill and opportunity to look at

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ourselves we can become a violent, ego-driven society. Even people of faith, dedicated to community and prayer have fallen prey to a knee-jerk “Yes!” to all requests for service instead of choosing a countercultural “No” to a society sick with the violence of hyperactivity.

We are sincere and dedicated to establishing a just peace in our world, but we can become so driven that we fail to ground our action in the spiritual authority born from a contemplative spirit. Authentic prophets speak with a passion that holds their message like a feather in their hand, knowing that it really isn’t up to them.

Loss of silent spaces contributes to violence. We clutter interior space with a wall of words which ricochet off the hearts of strangers and loved ones, allowing us to rest safely in our egos. Imagine what this behavior looks like in a negotiation process or a discernment process. Spirit cannot worm her way into a welcoming interior space because there is no opening.

### A Path to Peace

#### Live Consciously

We transform a culture of violence into a culture of peace when we make a daily commitment to slow down and pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit that come to us in people and events. Two spiritual practices engage us in this process, self-reflection and silent waiting. Without self-knowledge we rain down violence on one another and go blithely on our way. Spiritual development is not a passive thing that

happens to us by osmosis; rather, it is a balance of our own hard work and grace. Without self-reflection there is no self-knowledge. Self-reflection pulls the ego out of the hurricane of violent words and actions into Presence, where the invitation to the other is welcoming.



Sharing with a spiritual director, counselor or prayer partner can spur spiritual growth through self-knowledge.

If we train ourselves to wait silently for the spaces between words we find God there. I talked my way through the first half of my life, keeping myself safe from life. The first step toward recovery was an intentional practice of sitting at

Thich Nhat Hanh offers us a poignant challenge in this excerpt from his poem, “Call Me by My True Names.” Somewhere in it lies the key to empathy.

*...I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate, and I am the pirate,*

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*If we train ourselves to wait silently for the spaces between words we find God there.*

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table saying nothing, learning how to listen from an authentic place. It’s all about listening as if we cannot hear with our ears, so we must hear with our souls. This contemplative listening touches the soul of the other with our presence.<sup>1</sup> We enter that place of sacred presence in ourselves by recognizing the difference between our ego needs and desires and the true self divested of ego. Abiding in that place, even if for just a moment, we are free to connect with the other and sparks of spiritual energy ignite and transform.

### Practice Empathy

Much of the literature on nonviolence is helpful in developing our capacity for empathy. Before we can take the perspective of another we need to dialogue, read, reflect and experience.

*my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.*

Our most grounded activists know this truth. When they come out of the trenches of seeing too much and despairing of ever doing enough we need to enfold them with loving compassion.

### Be One

How can we wrap our minds around the concept of ONE? Meister Eckhart is full of references to it: “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one. One seeing, one knowing, one loving.” We might also say, “The eye with which God sees me is the same eye with which God sees my neighbor. My eye and my neighbor’s eye are one.” Think again about Thich Nhat Hanh’s poem. If the eye with which the pirate

sees God is the same eye with which God sees the pirate’s victim, why is it so hard to believe that the space where the pirate is seen by God is the same space where I am seen by God? Passing judgment is a direct consequence of dualistic thinking and judgment often results in violent behavior. The book *Blindspot* explains that our brains have evolved to pay special attention to others who are like us. So, in prehistoric social practice strangers were automatically perceived as threats, and violence was an instinctual response. Modern humans, however, are psychologically and spiritually equipped to move beyond suspicion to trust but we have to stop “filling in what we don’t know with what we think we know.”<sup>2</sup> For me this is the hardest spiritual work. I say this mantra as a spiritual practice and it helps me to change focus:

*Breathing in I welcome the other.  
Breathing out I release judgment.  
Breathing in I am at one with the other.  
Breathing out I release duality.*

The presidential campaign held a mirror before us and what we saw was painful. It is time to heed hope’s call to begin again. The prophet-poet Marge Piercy summons us, “We must shine with hope, stained glass windows that shape light into icons, glow like lanterns borne before a procession. Who can bear hope back into the world but us?” Shine on.

▲ *Rita Hemmer Kowats is a spiritual director living in a little anchorage in the Seattle area. She can be contacted at [www.spiritualitywithoutborders.wordpress.com](http://www.spiritualitywithoutborders.wordpress.com). Paradoxically, it was during her tenure with the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action that she realized her call to live a contemplative lifestyle.*

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<sup>1</sup> See the IPJC publication, *Contemplative Dialogue Circles*, <http://ipjc.org/publications/index.htm> for ideas on how to incorporate these thoughts in a group.

<sup>2</sup> For an eye-opening look at this human tendency and its evolutionary roots, see *Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People* by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald

# Challenging Times Call for *New Resolve*

The results of the election have many community and faith leaders around the country wondering about how policies of a new Presidential Administration may affect people who are marginalized as well as our Earth community. We convened community leaders whose mission and ministry include justice on behalf of immigrants, Muslims, people experiencing homelessness and Earth.

**Arsalan Bukhari** and **Aria Wilson:** Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

**Mary Pauline Diaz:** Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

**Jessie Dye:** Earth Ministry

**Michael Ramos:** Church Council of Greater Seattle

ten don't know our neighbors and that leads to misunderstanding and mistrust. The faith community has a role to encounter one another, build new relationships, and help articulate that the immigrant and Muslim communities are striving for a sustainable livelihood just like all of us are.

**Mary Pauline Diaz:** The issues are interdependent, which also means that the work is interdependent. Socially we exist in silos, we don't interact with our neighbors.

*"We often don't know our neighbors and that leads to misunderstanding and mistrust."*

**AMOS:** *What are the challenges or barriers we might be facing as we work for justice on behalf of immigrants, Muslims, marginalized communities and climate change?*

**Jessie Dye:** Looking at many of the President-Elect's appointments from an environmental perspective, the major appointees are from the major fossil fuel industries. We don't want to make enemies and we want to be compassionate, but the people being appointed are pro-pipeline, pro-fracking, pro-drilling in the arctic. This will make the administrative lay of the land extremely challenging.

**Michael Ramos:** The challenge that we face is the divisive rhetoric against Muslims and immigrants that is being converted into actions that are harming people. This is a great concern from the Christian perspective. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. We have a societal challenge in that we of-

**Arsalan Bukhari:** Public opinion has been influenced so much in the last 15 years, so it's very hard to pass logical policies and also to make logical arguments. [Groups against Islam] are very well-funded and effective. Any response has to be at the same scale, but also be a more efficient operation—that hasn't been done yet. That's why the anti-Muslim narrative is prevailing. 2015 had the highest anti-Muslim hate crimes ever reported.

**AMOS:** *What are the shifts in strategy that we must attend to as we organize within a context of a people and planet on the margins?*

**MR:** We need to have social analysis and theological reflection on what's going on and we need to bring our faith to the public square. The intersectionality of racism and

an unjust economy go together. Unless we address both issues simultaneously, we will continue to have immense disproportionality in terms of unjust policies and practices toward communities of color, immigrants and refugees, Muslims, Sikhs and other communities.

**JD:** The strategic question is really important, and goes back to the importance of the issues being considered together. I want to credit the environmental community with deciding that we need to work together across lines of race and class. At Earth Ministry we have been partnering with native communities who are often at the front lines.

**MR:** At times, I believe that within the Christian community, we need to do deeper reflection to understand our own complicity with some of the injustices that are either being suggested or acted upon. We need to reach out to our neighbors, to begin to talk with each other and work together.

**AMOS:** *How do we take the leap from "knowing our neighbor" to actually being in relationship?*

**MD:** I'm personally at a place where I think it's important to call our community members out. A part of the



*Michael Ramos speaking at an interfaith event.*

reason my [Catholic] faith is so important to me is that I interact with people with different ideologies. Something I think a lot about is how we can push our leaders to be bolder, say what they're thinking, to call out the people who agree and don't agree with us. What I've witnessed the last few weeks is that people, especially young people, have a lot of energy to show up, and to do things. Our faith community is where we can find the support that sustains us.

**AB:** What people can do in their daily lives is be a public and vocal witness beyond social media. You can take those same [social media] posts, copy and paste them into an email, and send them to your local paper, and that reaches people beyond your circle. In Muslim tradition, Mohammad preached in the market place. The best way to reach people is in the public square through letters to the editor. That's an access point that any average American has. Lawmakers look at public opinion.

**Aria Wilson:** This can also challenge our nationalist ideology, and [help to] alleviate fear.

**JD:** The plague of climate advocates is that we think that we can say the facts and that people will believe them. Facts have not been particularly important on social media because the "better story" sells and gets more clicks even if it's not true. We need to tell a more compelling, more heroic story!

**AMOS:** *Why do people need to be involved in immigrant, Muslim and climate change justice and what difference will it make?*

**AB:** It can enrich your life. In concrete terms, as a business owner or manager, you have much more productive employees if they are at ease when they're not worried about the safety of their families. If you're a teacher, you'll have much more attentive students.

**MD:** This is a critical moment. Even before the election, we were seeing lots of movements springing up, more conversations around climate change, Standing Rock, Black Lives Matter, these things are all connected.

**JD:** Since the election, we've had an enormous outpouring of support and people calling to ask "what can we do?" To me, it's very powerful that the fear, despair, and anger has manifested in "I want to do something." We have a moment where we can bring people to understand that every act of citizenship, every letter to the editor, call to your Senator, every time you sit down next to someone in a veil on a bus, every next step we take makes us more secure in our own faith and our own values. It gives us an inner efficacy, a sense that we are answering the call of our Creator and call of our conscience. That's a powerful motivator to take those steps, to motivate those who are less engaged to take a next step.

# Slacktivism: Activism from your Couch

Chances are, you have heard the word "slacktivism" before today. If not, you might be surprised that it has become so mainstream that it was added to the Oxford-English Dictionary in fall of 2016. The definition reads as follows:

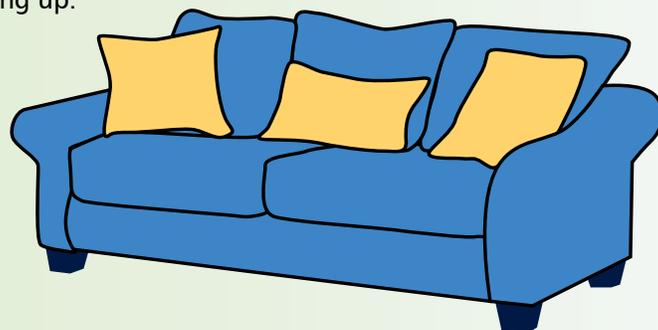
Slacktivism (ˈslɒktɪvɪz(ə)m): [mass noun]: Actions performed via the Internet in support of a political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement, e.g. signing an online petition or joining a campaign group on a social media website or application.

Most of us with social media accounts have done this: signed a "Change.org" petition, "shared" or "retweeted" a powerful image in support an organization's cause, filled out an action alert to our legislative officials, maybe you've even utilized Facebook's new "Donate" button on your favorite organization's page.

Is this passive form of activism actually helpful? Does it replace good ol' fashioned in-person activism (such as protests and vigils)? It depends on who you ask, but both methods have been proven effective. Certainly, sharing about an organization's cause raises awareness about the issue, and can even influence policy makers if enough people share their concerns. However, there is something to be said for physically showing up for the cause you believe in, either through nonviolent direct action, benefit dinners, or advocacy days. There is no replacement for this kind of involvement.

So, maybe you're a "slacktivist," who signs every petition, fills out every action alert, and shares every update from your favorite organization, but don't actually show up in person to a nonviolent direct action. Or maybe you do show up, but you've stayed silent on social media for fear of conflict with your "friends" with opposing views instead of using this platform to engage in dialogue.

If you're doing one or the other, now is the perfect time to step outside of your comfort zone. Let's give voice to peace and justice in this time of great division by engaging in both "slacktivism" and physically showing up.



# Nuclear Weapons:

## Taking Stock

by Jamie DeMarco

### Our Accomplishments

On September 20th 1961 President Kennedy secretly called together a handful of military advisors to ask them the ultimate question: Should the United States launch a surprise, all out, nuclear attack on the Soviet Union? Multiple high ranking officials, including General Thomas Power, urged Kennedy to pull the trigger, and Kennedy was sincerely tempted to follow their advice. However, thanks largely to the advocacy of ordinary citizens over generations, not only did Kennedy decide not to pull that trigger; no such trigger has ever been pulled.

The nonviolent disarmament movement deserves credit for this and many other incredible accomplishments.

Seven decades of nuclear abstinence have been rusting the world's nuclear arsenal into oblivion. While thousands remain, the world has eliminated 85% of nuclear weapons, and the trend lines will continue to point downward as the United States and Russia disarm in accordance with the New START treaty.

Once, war with Iran over its nuclear program seemed inevitable. Now, Iran's plutonium reactors have been filled with concrete, without a single shot being fired. Iran is not alone in ceasing to pursue nuclear weapons. In past decades far more countries have abandoned the quest for the bomb then acquired it. Brazil, Libya, South Africa, Taiwan, and many others all once had nuclear programs that have now been terminated.

As the number of nuclear weapons decline and the states seeking to acquire them become rarer, the world as a whole has been leaving nuclear weapons behind. This progress has been driven by the passion and persistence of a people-powered movement.

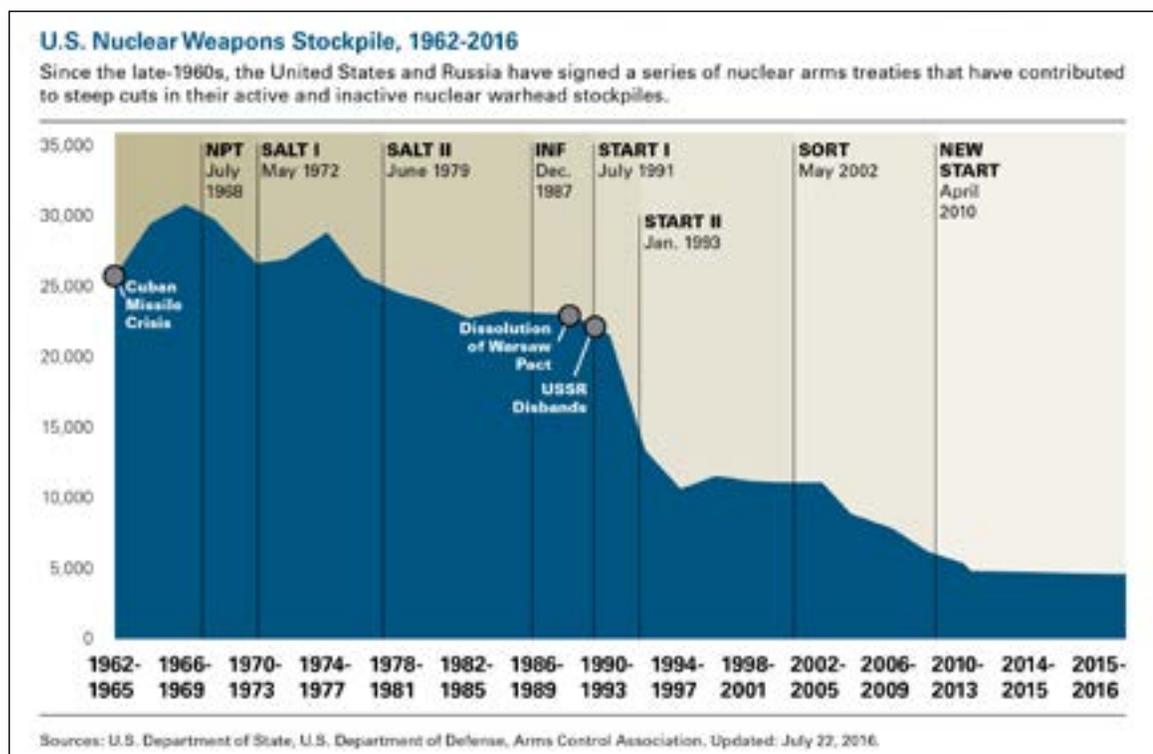
### The Current Landscape

Former defense secretary William Perry asserts that the threat of a nuclear weapon being detonated on U.S. soil is higher today than it was at the height of the Cold War. The danger is no longer from intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from Russia, but from ISIS or a similar organization smuggling a dirty bomb into the United States to be detonated.

Rather than addressing the 21st century nuclear threat by funding the Energy Department's programs to secure fissile material, congress plans to

pour approximately one trillion dollars into modernizing and maintaining our nuclear arsenal. This will include more than \$300 billion for entirely new, unnecessary weapons systems.

India and Pakistan each possess nuclear stockpiles that are approximately 2% the size of the U.S. arsenal, but both countries are building more. Deep-rooted violence along their border continues today, and this hot bed is a likely location for a nuclear war.



The most difficult challenge facing nuclear security today is the nuclear weapons program of North Korea, which has multiple nuclear warheads and is steadily developing the missile technology to reach the United States. Sanctions have not succeeded in deterring North Korea's nuclear program and the government has asserted it will not willingly disarm.

## What to Do Now

The Trump Administration poses some grave dangers to the critically complex global environment of nuclear weapons. Taking our nuclear weapons off of hair trigger alert, enacting a No-First-Use policy for nuclear weapons, and canceling plans for a destabilizing nuclear cruise missile are all actions that would reduce the likelihood of nuclear war. While such policies are now far less likely to be enacted than they were under the Obama Administration, there are other potential opportunities for President Trump.

Every significant reduction in the nuclear stockpile has taken place un-

der a republican administration, and Trump may be uniquely positioned to restore normative relations with Russia in order to enact a new stockpile reduction treaty.

While Mr. Trump has pledged he would tear up the Iran deal on day one

*As the number of nuclear weapons decline and the states seeking to acquire them become rarer, the world as a whole has been leaving nuclear weapons behind.*

of his presidency, the reality is more complicated. The agreement is between 8 different countries, and if the United States backs out, the rest of the nations could still abide by the contract.

As of the writing of this article, officials chosen to serve in the Trump Administration are drafting federal budgets. Buried deep in thousands of pages of budgetary items is a line appropriating funds for international organizations that ensure the security of fissile material. Fully funding international fissile material security projects would cost a fraction of the trillion dollars the United States plans to invest in nuclear

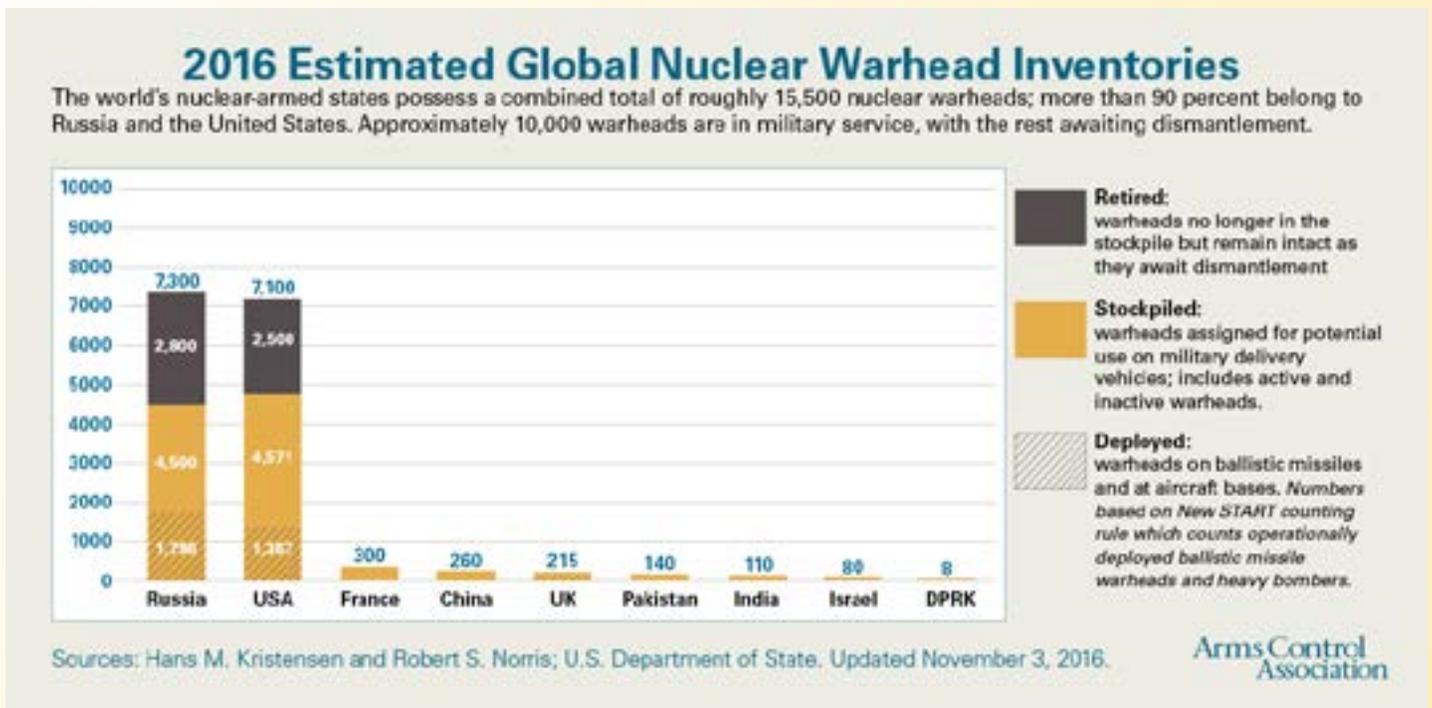
deterrent capabilities, and it may do far more to protect the world from nuclear warfare. Asking your members of congress to fully fund international fissile security is one of the most effective steps you can take to ensure nuclear peace.

Now is the time to fully engage our federal government. Contact you members of congress. Urge them to support nuclear weapon stockpile reductions, defend

the Iran deal, seek nonviolent solutions to North Korea's nuclear program, and fully fund fissile material security programs. Our movement must continue the resolve and determination that has won so many victories and will win many more to come.

▲ *Jamie DeMarco works at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, a Quaker lobby in the public interest, on nuclear disarmament and Pentagon spending.*

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. (2016, December). Retrieved from Nuclear Notebook: <http://thebulletin.org/nuclear-notebook-multimedia>





# INTERCOMMUNITY

## ▶ Immigration

“Be assured of our solidarity and continued accompaniment as you work for a better life.” —US Catholic Conference of Bishops

IPJC has created a wallet card for immigrants who may be stopped, questioned or detained. Download it at <http://www.ipjc.org/programs/CTD%20Tarjeta.pdf>



## ▶ Who is My Neighbor?

The Face of Poverty in Washington State

## A Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of Washington State

IPJC encourages faith communities to gather to encounter people living in poverty and to explore ways to be in solidarity with them as we act and advocate for change. The Letter, 3-session study guide and video are available from the Washington State Catholic Conference: [thewscc.org](http://thewscc.org) • 206.301.0556

## ▶ Catholic Advocacy Day 2017



**MARCH 16, OLYMPIA, WA**

Email: [catholicadvocacyday@ipjc.org](mailto:catholicadvocacyday@ipjc.org)

## ▶ Eastern WA Legislative Conference

**January 28, 9am - 3pm**

**St Mark's Lutheran Church, Spokane**

RSVP: [info@thefigtree.org](mailto:info@thefigtree.org) / 509.535.4112

## ▶ Justice Cafés

### Upcoming Topics

**January**—Housing & Homelessness

**February**—Community Peacebuilding

To host a Café anywhere Contact Elizabeth Murphy at [emurphy@ipjc.org](mailto:emurphy@ipjc.org)



After the “Building Interfaith Relationships” Justice Café Kabuza Peter, Jinja, Uganda said, “It is a pleasure for us as young adults to deepen our faith, because we realized that irrespective of...religions, we were all created in God’s image.”

## ▶ Justice Circles



The Latino community gathered for a workshop and organizing, *Hacia una Vivienda Digna y Saludable, on Healthy and Dignified Housing.*

## Successful Neighborhood Safety Campaign



The Burien Justice Circle and community celebrate the ribbon cutting for a new crosswalk with lights and safety signs.

## ▶ Donations

**In honor of:** Francine Barber, OP, Marian Castelluccio, OP, Mary Annette Dworshak, SNJM, Linda Haydock, SNJM, Joan Pokorny, OSB, Jeri Renner, OP, Rosemary Rognstad

**In memory of:** Anne Heger, OP, Michele Kopp, OP

# PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

NEWS • ANNOUNCEMENTS • UPCOMING EVENTS

## ▶ Message from Linda Haydock, SNJM

This month I begin a new position in leadership for my religious community, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. We are an international congregation with sisters and associates in Brazil, Canada, Lesotho, Peru, South Africa and the United States and our administrative office is in Montreal.

My religious community has given me the privilege of ministering at the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center for 25 years. We began with a yellow pad and a vision for a future full of hope as we partnered with you to create a just and peaceful world and church and a healthy Earth community. Today, it is with great gratitude that I thank you for making it possible for IPJC to provide programming in 20 countries, empowering those on the margins to change systems and gathering in churches, community spaces, and corporate board rooms to build community and create change for the common good!

It is the partnership of our religious communities with you that has made our “Dream it and we can do it” philosophy poised and positioned to undertake the next great movements of possibility in our world, church and local communities.

Now more than ever we need to strengthen our efforts, our community building and our commitment to mentor youth, empower those on the periphery, engage in contemplative dialogue in an era of division, care for our Earth and speak truth to power in love to transform our world and church.

Today, I ask you to support and participate in IPJC in new and imaginative ways because this is our moment in history when God trusts us to do what must be done for the sake of the whole community!

The community and relationships that I have experienced over these 25 years are ones that I cherish and hold as sacred. As I leave my role at IPJC, I will carry them in my heart and they will be a catalyst for transformation in my new ministry.

Thank you for all you are, have been and will continue to be for me and us at IPJC!

—Linda Haydock, SNJM



Linda with Louise Dumont, CSJP

## ▶ Linda Haydock, SNJM Receives the 2017 Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen Award

Presented by Catholic Community Services of Western Washington



*To one who has sought justice,  
Loved kindly, and  
Humbly changed our world.*

When asked what he thought of Linda as the recipient, Archbishop Hunthausen said, "I can't think of anyone more deserving."

## ▶ IPJC Welcomes Patty Bowman!

The Governing Council is pleased to announce that Patty Bowman is our new Executive Director.

Patty, who has a law degree from Harvard and M.A. degrees in Theology and Pastoral Studies, has served as Adjunct Faculty at Seattle University and was the Director of Outreach and Advocacy for St. James Cathedral. In her ministry she has often collaborated with IPJC and she knows and supports our mission. We look forward to Patty's leadership of IPJC.



Steve Donaldson and Stephen Sundborg, SJ join Patty at IPJC's Reception for Linda



## ▶ Support IPJC

Thank you to all who have contributed to our annual appeal.

- Remember to let us know if your company matches donations
- Consider designating IPJC in your United Way pledge
- We accept gifts of stock



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## Invitation to be Peacemakers

Invite people to gather for a reflection and discussion on creating a culture of peace. Ask them to read this issue of *A Matter of Spirit* and reflect on the following questions in preparation for the gathering.

“We live in a violent culture... We are losing our ability to live in our own presence, the presence of others and the presence of the divine. What practice would help me “begin the journey back to peace: live consciously, practice empathy and be One?”

“The stakes—the fate of the Earth and future generations—are higher; the protagonists are new—with Indigenous communities and women playing a crucial role; and the spirituality of nonviolence is deeper and more holistic—rooted in the gift of Creation.” What can we learn from Indigenous and women-led movements about the “spirituality of nonviolence?”

“What could be possible if each group approached gun violence...[with]neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict...but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue?”

#### Gathering

Gather in a circle with a ritual table and enough small candles for each person present. Consider beginning with a peace song.

#### Reading

“In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new nonviolent

order rooted in the unconditional love of God. Jesus called his disciples to love their enemies (Mt. 5:44), which includes respecting the image of God in all persons... to offer no violent resistance...(Mt. 5:39); to become peacemakers...to be abundantly merciful (Mt. 5:7).”

#### Dialogue

**Leader:** In the spirit of Rumi who says, “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I’ll meet you there,” let’s begin sharing our reflections on our questions.

**Leader:** Let’s quietly hold and appreciate what we have heard.

#### Closing Prayer

**Leader:** As we bring our time to a close let’s take a moment of quiet to consider one way you will promote a culture of peace in your home, workplace or community. After the quiet when you share please light one of the candles.

**Leader:** As we respond to our God’s call to be peacemakers we pray

**All:** And now let us believe in the new year that is given to us new untouched full of things that have never been.

—Rainer Maria Rilke