



# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

*Nebraskans for Peace*

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## United Nations Outlaws Nuclear Weapons



*Catholic Worker activists gathered December 28, the “Feast of the Holy Innocents”, outside the headquarters of U.S. Strategic Command in Bellevue for their annual protest against the U.S.’s nuclear arsenal. They returned January 22, when the U.N.’s “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” officially entered into force.*

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January 22, 2021 was a historic day for the movement to ban nuclear weapons when the United Nations “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” entered into force, establishing in international law a categorical ban on nuclear weapons.

On October 24, 2020, Honduras became the 50th country to ratify the Treaty, pushing the agreement over the threshold required to enter into force. Honduras’ ratification set the stage for the international treaty to take effect on January 22, 2021 despite the refusal of the United States, the

*conclusion on page 2*

*Nebraskans for Peace’s state office in Lincoln is located on land that formerly belonged to the Otoe Tribe.*

## Nebraska Report

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## Nebraskans for Peace

NFP is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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# Nuclear Weapons Treaty Ban, conclusion

United Kingdom, Russia, and other powerful nuclear-armed nations to sign on to the agreement which requires that signatories "never under any circumstances... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess, or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices."

Nebraskans for Peace President and Vietnam War veteran Ron Todd-Meyer blended his praise for the milestone Treaty with criticism for his own country. "For half a century, as signatories of the 1970 'Non-Proliferation Treaty', the U.S. and other nuclear states have been legally obliged to abolish their nuclear arsenals in exchange for the rest of the world refusing to develop these Weapons of Mass

***"For half a century, as signatories of the 1970 'Non-Proliferation Treaty', the U.S. and other nuclear states have been legally obliged to abolish their nuclear arsenals in exchange for the rest of the world refusing to develop these Weapons of Mass Destruction."***

Destruction," Todd-Meyer stated. "But not only has the United States steadfastly failed to honor its legal obligation," he said, "the U.S. government is actively engaged in a trillion-dollar 'modernization' of its stockpile and is one of only a handful of nations to oppose the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In the eyes of the world community, we are shameless outlaws criminally imperiling the entire earth."

The Treaty's official entry into force was marked by actions, events, and celebrations around the globe and across the United States—including Bellevue, Nebraska, where activists from at least four Midwestern states conducted a protest rally at Offutt Air Force Base, headquarters for the United States Strategic Command and the site of anti-nuclear weapons protests for more than 60 years.

"The world has banned chemical and biological weapons as so evil to all the world that they must not exist," said Father James Murphy, a Catholic pastor who came to Offutt from Highland, Wisconsin. "Banning nuclear weapons is not a wild-eyed dream but a practical progression for the world community. To honor the sacred nature of all human, animal and plant life is to say no to nuclear weapons!"

For more information, visit the Facebook page Nuclear Ban Treaty EIF and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons {ICAN} events page at <http://www.icanw.org/events>.

# FACT SHEET

## TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1. The Treaty was approved at the United Nations in July 2017 by 122 nations.

2. According to the terms of the Treaty, 50 nations had to ratify it (or accede to it) before it would enter into force. Entry into force would automatically happen 90 days after the 50<sup>th</sup> ratification was deposited at the UN.

3. As of November 1, 2020, 84 states have signed the treaty.

4. On October 24, 2020, Honduras became the 50<sup>th</sup> nation to deposit its ratification at the United Nations.

5. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will enter into force on January 22, 2021.

6. None of the nuclear weapons states (US, Russia, England, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea) have signed the Treaty. Legally, the terms of the Treaty will not apply to them until they have signed the Treaty. None of the “umbrella states”—those countries protected by agreements with nuclear powers—have signed the Treaty.

7. The Treaty outlaws the development, manufacture, testing, possession, transfer, acquisition, stockpiling, use or threat of use, control or receipt, stationing or deployment of nuclear weapons.

8. The Entry Into Force of the Treaty will make nuclear weapons illegal under International Law.

9. The Entry Into Force will pressure umbrella nations, especially nations with US/NATO nuclear weapons deployed on their soil (Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Turkey) and nations that permit nuclear weapons in their ports, controlled waters, or on US bases on their soil, to reconsider their responsibilities under the Treaty.

10. Five of the nuclear weapons states (US, England, France, China, Russia) have been obligated under the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (since 1970) to pursue disarmament “in good faith” “at an early date.” The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an expression of the impatience of non-nuclear states with the failure of NPT states to meet their obligation to disarm.

11. According to Article 6 of the US Constitution, international treaties to which the US is a signatory are the “Supreme Law of the Land” and supersede state laws.

12. With the Entry Into Force of the TPNW, Nuclear Weapons will now be in the same category as land mines, cluster munitions, chemical and biological weapons, and poison gas.

13. As of September 2020, the nuclear weapons states possess 13,400 nuclear weapons. The breakdown\* is as follows—

Russia	4,310	(1,572 deployed)
US	3,800	(1,750)
China	320	
France	290	(200)
UK	195	(60)
Pakistan	160	
India	150	
Israel	90	
North Korea	35	

# What Does the Nukes Ban Accomplish?

by Rebecca Davis Gibbons  
*The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*  
October 30, 2020

When the 50th country ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) last week, setting up the treaty to enter into force in January 2021, the U.S. government reiterated a longstanding talking point about it. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus asserted: “The TPNW will not result in the elimination of a single nuclear weapon.”

By saying this, the U.S. government is making the argument that no current nuclear weapon possessor state—itsself included—intends to join the treaty. Nor have states protected by extended nuclear deterrence so far indicated any plans to join it. The talking point seems to suggest the treaty is pointless—it will not do the one thing it set out to accomplish, ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

But the very fact of the strong vocal opposition is telling. If the treaty is worthless, why have the nuclear weapon states felt the need to so vehemently denounce it? Why did the United States, in a last ditch effort to prevent its entry into force, try to persuade current members to withdraw from it? Nuclear weapons states could, after all, simply ignore the new treaty and not provide it with any undue additional attention.

The reason is because they fear the treaty, even if they do not plan to join it. Why? The nuclear weapon states are aware of the long-term potential effect of the norm that underpins it: the idea that it is not appropriate for any states to possess nuclear weapons. In attempting to stigmatize nuclear weapons among populations around the world, the treaty risks bringing attention to the devastation wrought by nuclear weapons to members of the general public. Though nuclear weapon states do not plan to join the treaty today, they

are concerned that in the short- to medium-term their allies will face pressure to join the treaty, undermining extended nuclear deterrence. In the longer term, the norm enshrined in the treaty could influence their own publics, potentially turning citizens against nuclear weapons. A public against nuclear weapons will not support nuclear deterrence or the immense expense involved in maintaining and updating nuclear arsenals. For a government that believes that nuclear deterrence is a source of strategic stability and existential security, this norm is dangerous.

The United States in particular knows the power of strong, universal norms, especially in the nuclear realm. For 50 years, the U.S. government has been the most important force in promoting the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in order to promote a global norm against the spread of nuclear weapons. A 1992 cable from the U.S. State Department to several U.S. embassies reads: “The NPT has proved its value over the years: It has established an international norm under which virtually all nations view the further spread of nuclear weapons a grave threat to regional and global security.” Recognizing the value of a strong nonproliferation norm, the U.S. government promoted the NPT to all states, even those that had little interest in nuclear technology. As the U.S. Government Accountability Office explained in a 1980 report on U.S. efforts to promote the NPT: “But countries with little or no nuclear material are not ignored, as adherence by just one additional state increases by two the difference between the number of parties and nonparties and thereby serves to further isolate the nonparty states.”

Universal norms have power—U.S. leaders know this. For proponents of nuclear deterrence like the U.S. government, the norms of the NPT are strategically valuable because they allow the United States and four other states to maintain their nuclear weapons while keeping the rest of the world from possessing their own. In contrast, the norm promoted by the ban treaty is meant to apply to all states and so U.S. leaders fear its long-term effects.

## Your Foundation Speaks

by *Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President*

I want to report that, in spite of the coronavirus pandemic, our investments in alternative energy and alternative energy infrastructure are doing very well. For the first time our permanent endowment has over \$1 million invested.

Our investments include Brookfield Renewable Partners and Brookfield Renewable Corporation, Hannon Armstrong Sustainable Infrastructure Capital and NextEra Energy and NextEra Energy Partners. Dividends, estimated to be nearly \$40,000 annually from our investments, go directly to support Nebraskans for Peace.

Please consider what you can do and make a donation to Nebraska Peace Foundation so we can add more renewable energy stocks to our portfolio.



# Thank All of Nebraska's Members of Congress for Their 'Yes' Votes!

by Mark Welsch, Omaha's NFP Coordinator

It is a great day when Nebraskans for Peace, our members, supporters and affiliated organizations can pat ourselves on the back and say 'thank you' to our entire Nebraska Congressional delegation. Today is one of those days! Senators Deb Fischer and Ben Sasse, along with Representatives Adrian Smith, Jeff Fortenberry and Don Bacon all voted 'Yes' on the omnibus bill package. It contained three parts that will help climate change issues. We worked to get those parts passed into law.

NFP has been working closely with Citizens' Climate Lobby to address the climate change issue since we helped form three chapters of that organization at our 2012 Annual Peace Conference, where CCL Executive Director Mark Reynolds was our keynote speaker. With the passage of the omnibus bus, however, we're now seeing the tangible result of all this work. The article below by CCL's Communications Director, Flannery Winchester, provides an overview of the bill and describes each of its three component parts.

Take advantage of this opportunity to call your three members of Congress (MOC). All you have to do is tell them your name, where you live, and then just say "Thank you for your yes vote on the omnibus package that included the BEST Act, USE IT Act and the Climate-Ready Fisheries Act. All of these will help us deal with climate change." They need to hear only our thanks about this one bill today. If you want to talk with them about another issue, please call them a second time to separate the two issues.

To get their numbers, and one monthly email or text, to remind you to call them each month, go here: <https://cclcalls.org/>  
Here is how to call Nebraska's MOC:

- Senator Deb Fischer 202-224-6551
- Senator Ben Sasse 202-224-4224
- Rep. Adrian Smith 202-225-6435
- Rep. Jeff Fortenberry 202-225-4806
- Rep. Don Bacon 202-225-4155

## Three of CCL's lobbying 'asks' pass Congress and become law

by Flannery Winchester, CCL's Communications Director

Just before heading home for the 2020 holidays, the U.S. House and Senate passed a massive omnibus package. The package, which includes COVID relief and government funding, is also "the most significant energy legislation in more than a dozen years," *Politico* reports. President Trump signed it.

"The agreement includes sweeping clean energy reforms, R&D [research and development] enhancements, efficiency incentives, and extends clean energy tax credits to create hundreds of thousands of jobs across the clean economy," Congressional leaders announced. "The package also phases out superpollutant HFCs [hydrofluorocarbons], positioning the U.S. to lead the world in avoiding up to 0.5 degree Celsius of global warming."

This is fantastic news of bipar-

tisan climate progress—but the good news doesn't stop there. Tucked below the encouraging headlines are details of particular interest to Citizens' Climate Lobby supporters.

The package includes the major provisions from three of CCL's "supporting ask" bills: the BEST Act, the USE IT Act, and the Climate-Ready Fisheries Act. "CCL volunteers played

a key role in getting cosponsors for those bills, which was a factor in them being included in the bigger bill," says Ben Pendergrass, CCL Senior Director of Government Affairs.

Let's take a closer look at each one:

### BEST Act

CCL began lobbying on the Better Energy Storage Technology (BEST) Act in June of 2019. The bill, which authorizes \$300 million over five years to reduce the cost of grid-scale energy storage systems, gained 24 cosponsors following CCL's June lobbying this year. That support was a factor in the BEST Act being included in the Clean Economy Jobs and Innovation Act, which the House passed in September.



Citizens' Climate Lobby

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# When It's Your Turn, Take Both COVID-19 Vaccines

by Mark Welsh, NFP Omaha Coordinator and Sandi Hanna, NFP Palestinian Rights Task Force

There is hope in the air. COVID-19 vaccines are free in the U.S. and are being distributed in the whole country. To protect yourself, and those around you, get the vaccine as soon as it is your turn. Medical professionals and people in nursing homes are first in line followed by elderly people. Nebraskans for Peace is urging our elected officials to prioritize Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the U.S. These groups are being hit the hardest.

Sadly, not everyone in the world is as fortunate as we are. There is apartheid distribution in at least one country. One group is not being allowed to have the vaccine—not even doctors caring for sick and dying patients in hospitals.

**What do the vaccines do and not do?**

**They prevent 95% of the people who are vaccinated from getting terribly sick or dying.**

The COVID-19 vaccines do NOT stop the spread of the disease. They are different from the Measles and Polio vaccines—which prevent people from spreading those dangerous illnesses. After getting the two doses, people should still be required to wear masks, wash your hands often for 20 seconds, socially distance and stay away from crowded places. You can still be a carrier and infect other people. Please don't have large family gatherings until this is really under control.

How many have died? Over 400,000 have died in the U.S. so far. That is the number of people who lived in Omaha during the 2010 census. Hundreds of thousands more will probably die this year. As long as bars and restaurants are allowed to serve people indoors and people are not required to wear masks, the pandemic will continue—until almost everyone has received the vaccine shots.

Drug companies' profits and vaccine inequalities are allowing younger, healthier adults to get vaccinated before health care workers and older people in poorer coun-

tries. Drug companies have targeted sales to locations where profits are the highest.

Israel's apartheid government isn't giving the vaccine to any Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank or in Israel's prisons. Not even to doctors and nurses in hospitals. Jewish prisoners and those in the illegal settlements in the West Bank, right next door to Palestinians, are being vaccinated. This apartheid treatment of Palestinians must stop. Congressmember Rashida Talib of Michigan, who is Palestinian American says her Palestinian grandmother was denied access to a vaccine.

To stop this injustice, contact your three members of Congress and ask them to work to urge Israel to stop their apartheid practice of not vaccinating any Palestinians. Here is how to call Nebraska's MOC:

- Senator Deb Fischer 202-224-6551
- Senator Ben Sasse 202-224-4224
- Rep. Adrian Smith 202-225-6435
- Rep. Jeff Fortenberry 202-225-4806
- Rep. Don Bacon 202-225-4155

## 'Yes' Votes!, conclusion

### USE IT Act

*Politico* calls the USE IT Act “a top priority of outgoing Environment and Public Works Chair John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) that would boost carbon capture and direct air capture technologies.” CCL volunteers have lobbied on this legislation since June of 2019, too, and it gained cosponsors after our lobbying pushes.

### Climate-Ready Fisheries Act

CCL volunteers also advocated for the Climate-Ready Fisheries Act in June of this year—the bill gained 10 cosponsors after our lobby days. This provision will require a report to be prepared about efforts to adapt

our nation's fisheries to the impacts of climate change.

The inclusion of these measures in the larger omnibus package shows that CCL's volunteer lobbying has an impact. And now that they've passed Congress, we're measurably closer to future bipartisan agreement and climate action. “Every success makes it easier to get to the next step,” Pendergrass says.

Another important lesson from this week's vote is that bipartisanship is necessary to get things done. These bills had bipartisan support in and out of Congress, and they passed in a larger bipartisan package. This is a powerful reminder why CCL works

in the way we do: we lobby members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, and our supporters are of all political stripes, because it takes a broad coalition to advance on these issues.

As we head into 2021, let's celebrate that three of our supporting asks will now be law alongside other valuable climate and energy policies. These types of wins take a long time to achieve, so let's savor the rare days when legislation crosses the finish line! Thank you to all our volunteers who lobbied on these bills, to our legislative staff who supported those efforts in D.C. all year round, and to everyone who has supported CCL to make it possible.

# Sen. Tom Brandt Introduces “Farm to School Program Act”

On January 14, 2021, Senator Tom Brandt of Plymouth introduced LB 396 to expand the scale and reach of Nebraska-produced food by creating a state farm to school program administered by the Department of Education with the cooperation of the Department



**Sen. Tom Brandt**  
**District 32**

of Agriculture. The program will provide networking resources for Nebraska schools, local vegetable and fruit growers, and meat producers to increase the quantity of quality local food served in our school cafeterias.

The bill, which grew out of an Agriculture Committee interim study task force report, LR 337, authorizes the creation of a “Farm to School Network” composed of local producers, school officials, cafeteria managers, and other stakeholders that would focus on connecting farmers, market gardeners and nearby educational institutions to help supply the fresh foods, and dairy and

meat products needed to serve Nebraska children. “This is Economic Development 101,” Sen. Brandt stated after introducing the legislation Thursday morning. “Nebraska has been missing out on a huge economic opportunity to grow our local economies. Here in one of the agricultural powerhouses of the world, we’re hemorrhaging both our

sourcing and serving food. Through classroom instruction, field trips and hands-on gardening, students learn more where their food comes from and how it is made. “Farm to school is not only educating a new generation of savvy consumers and healthy eaters,” Brandt said, “it’s a training ground for the farmers and market gardeners of tomorrow.”

***“...Here in one of the agricultural powerhouses of the world, we’re hemorrhaging both our tax dollars and our food dollars from our communities and school districts by purchasing out-of-state food to feed our kids.”***

tax dollars and our food dollars from our communities and school districts by purchasing out-of-state food to feed our kids.” The National School Lunch Program is the largest restaurant chain in the country and Nebraska should be aiming to source the bulk of what is served in school cafeterias right from local producers, including beef, chicken, dairy, grains, dry beans and in-season vegetables and fruits. The bill aims to keep these food dollars and property tax dollars at home circulating in our local economies. With children always needing to eat and schools constituting a stable, institutional market, farm to school is one of the most robust economic development tools a local community can employ.

But farm to school programs, the Plymouth farmer and lawmaker stressed, are about more than just

“Farm to school benefits our economy, our student’s education and health, as well as markets for our farmers. Farmers and school administrators have unique needs and they often aren’t aware of the other’s experience. A state-coordinated commitment to form the relationships and consistently address the issues would be immensely helpful,” Justin Carter of the Center for Rural Affairs and an LR 337 task force member said. “Farm to school efforts can keep children focused on the skills they need for success while simultaneously creating an appreciation of Nebraska’s diverse agricultural economy and heritage,” Alex McKiernan of Robinette Farms said. “Bringing Nebraska foods into Nebraska schools will open our children’s minds to the possibilities and opportunities right in their very own communities.”

# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

## Jim Hansen's Climate Forecast: Hot and Hotter

James Hansen, whom I got to know on a 'cold call' (a letter requesting manuscript review) 20 years ago when he was head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies at Columbia University, is now retired to his farm in eastern Pennsylvania. He is still a climate scientist and activist who recently joined with a colleague, Makiko Sato, to take the measure of several factors that influence the direction and intensity of climate change—of which the carbon-dioxide and methane levels are major influences, but not the only ones.

Having 'crunched the numbers' for their newly published paper, "Global Warming Acceleration" 12/14/20, they anticipate that temperatures will rise moderately until about 2024 or 2025, and then (if major action is not forthcoming to severely cut the rise of greenhouse gases) it's off to the races, with all of the influences coming into line to reinforce each other. This is a major warning from a scientist who has a record of being able to spot climate changes, and has been doing so for 40 years. I see no major media coverage thus far of this important warning.

**Hansen's and Sato's paper opens with this abstract:**

*Record global temperature in 2020, despite a strong La Niña in recent months, reaffirms a global warming acceleration that is too large to be unforced noise—it implies an increased growth rate of the total global climate forcing and Earth's energy imbalance. Growth*

*of measured forcings (greenhouse gases plus solar irradiance) decreased during the period of increased warming, implying that atmospheric aerosols probably decreased in the past decade. There is a need for accurate aerosol measurements and improved monitoring of Earth's energy imbalance.*

**Johansen, addendum:** La Niña periods usually occur when global temperatures are stable or falling. The coincidence of La Niña with record high temperatures is a red flag to climate scientists, which indicates that—everything else being equal (which, of course, is not usually how the atmosphere usually works)—temperatures would be even higher during an El Niño year. Given the usual cycle of El Niño and La Niña, the warmer cycle should return in a few years.

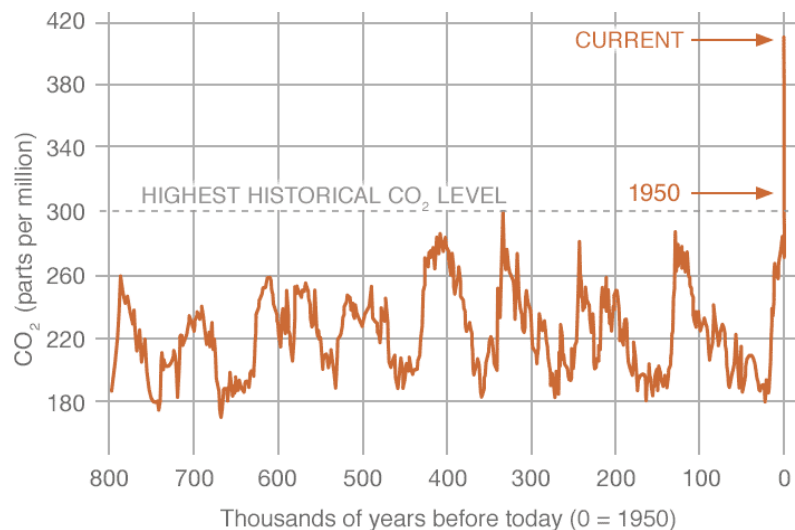
**Next, from Hansen and Sato:**

"November 2020 was the warmest November in the period of instrumental data, thus jumping 2020 ahead of 2016 in the 11-month averages. December 2016 was relatively cool, so it is clear that 2020 will slightly edge 2016 for the warmest year."

**And:**

"The rate of global warming accelerated in the past 6-7 years. The deviation of the 5-year (60 month) running mean from the linear warming rate is large and persistent; it implies an increase in the net climate forcing and Earth's energy imbalance, which drive global warming."

**Johansen, in journalist's language:** The temperatures of the Earth are rising in a persistent pattern, with 2020 and 2016 the warmest in recorded history.





Record highs during a La Niña year are downright scary.

**And, from Hansen and Sato:**

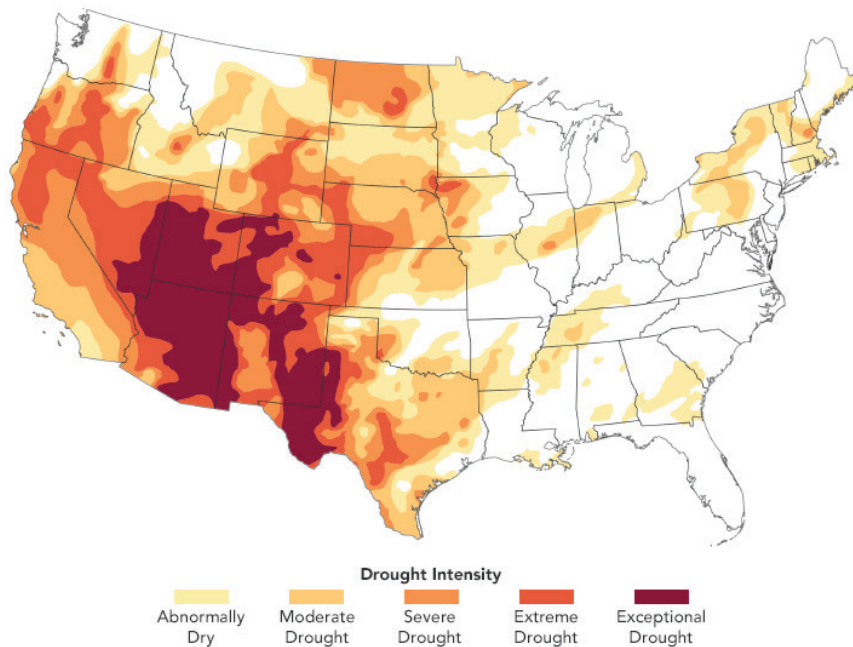
“Slower CO<sub>2</sub> growth offsets increased CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O growth, so our estimate for the added GHG forcing in 2020 is essentially the same as in 2019... As discussed in our “Young People’s Burden” paper (Hansen et al. 2017), the cost of CO<sub>2</sub> removal to get back on track is likely to be in the trillions of dollars.”

**Johansen:** Expensive, yes, but cheaper than expenses the next 200 to 300 years, when rising sea levels will probably have sea water lapping into many major cities and lots of valuable ocean-front property, such as Donald J. Trump’s Mar-a-Lago. “Mar” is lousy Latin for “ocean”, and the ocean will be quite a bit higher by then—high enough that people may be lobbing rotten tomatoes at portraits of Trump in the Greenhouse Gas Museum. *Note the carbon dioxide level graph. It’s rather easy to tell when humankind got hooked on fossil fuels. This spike will continue to be reflected in temperature rises long into the future even if further emissions rises come to a screeching halt, which is unlikely.*

**Hansen and Sato comment:** “Carbon dioxide growth is slower than usual right now, but this is being offset by increases in methane and nitrous oxides. Temperature increases will accelerate when human-provoked increases in carbon dioxide rise as well... The impact of solar irradiance on global temperature lags solar irradiance by 1-2 years, so we are still at the point where we are getting maximum cooling from the solar cycle. Maximum added push of the solar cycle toward a warmer climate will be in mid-decade, i.e., in about 5 years.”

**Hansen and Sato conclude:** “Global temperature prognostication: 2021 will be cooler than 2020, because of the lagged effect of the current strong La Niña. When the next El Niño occurs, perhaps about mid-decade, hang onto your hat.”

*Please see the illustration above of drought over the United States. This pattern has been locked in for several years, and is a large factor in western fires, with a jet stream to the north, which then runs southeast over the middle of the United States, and then northeast up the*



*Atlantic coast. This wave is a major cause of “nor’easters” (with frequent heavy snow) there. Nebraska is in the middle, with mainly dry flow from the northwest, but an occasional wiggle that can add snow to the mix in winter and drought year-round as well.*

**The Real Problem, Speaking of the “Young People’s Burden:”**

Hansen and Sato’s paper takes the prospects for significant warming out about five years. If we go out about 100 years on land and 200 to 300 or 400 years in the oceans, we run into some high-stakes bingo, involving thermal inertia.

The due bills for our use of fossil fuels are now being served. By 2015, scientists had figured that “burning the currently attainable fossil fuel resources is sufficient to eliminate the [Antarctic] ice sheet. This study was directed at Antarctica only, but all other ice would melt at the same time. How much time may be required to produce an ice-free planet? No one really knows. At present rates of increase, the actual burning of fossil-fuel reserves may take place within a thousand years. Complete melting of the ice, factoring in delays of thermal inertia, may require several thousand

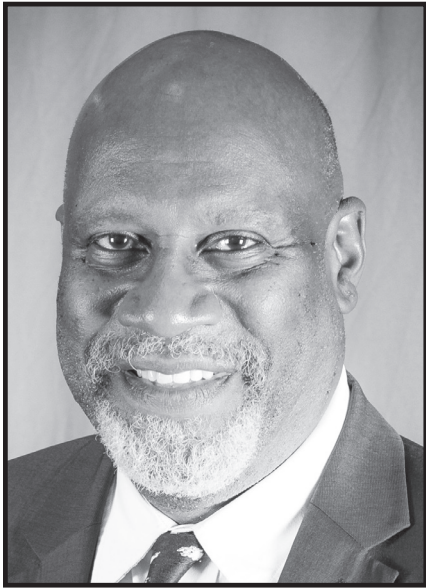
years. The momentum of this inertia would be irreversible, however.

Global warming is a deceptively backhanded crisis in which ‘thermal inertia’ delivers results a half-century or more *after* our burning of fossil fuels provokes them. Our political and diplomatic responses, however, generally only kick in *after* we see results. Thermal inertia plus political inertia thus presents the human race (and the planet we superintend) with a challenge to fashion a new energy future *before* raw necessity—the hot wind in our faces—compels action. Global warming is dangerous because it is a sneaky, slow-motion emergency, demanding that we acknowledge a reality occurring centuries into the future with a system of individual, legal, and diplomatic responses that are implemented immediately, in the *present*. As Ken Caldeira of Stanford University’s Carnegie Institute of Science told the *Washington Post* in 2015, “The legacy of what we’re doing over the next decades and the next centuries is really going to have a dramatic influence on this planet for many tens of thousands of years.”

*Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, is author of Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions (2017).*

# Conversations on Racism and Anti-Racism

by those who should know better in the *Omaha World-Herald*



***A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon,  
Community Advocate for  
Real Justice***

On the last day of the most racially charged year in generations, the *Omaha World-Herald* ran an article examining health disparities in America based on race. Whites, not unexpectedly, came out on top as the state's healthiest population. Interestingly enough, the article opened with a racial and ethnic breakdown of Nebraska high school graduation rates and discussion of the "gaps" between the groups in educational status, noting that, "Such gaps can lead to big differences in how healthy or unhealthy people are throughout their lives."

The reporter proceeded to quote the State of Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer saying that, "Typically, if someone

has less education, they may work in a lower-paying job, perhaps a job that does not offer health insurance... If they get ill or injured, they're less likely to be able to afford the care they need." Governor Ricketts' appointee continued, "With more education, people have more opportunities for better health—more income/resources means more access to health care, they're more likely to live in healthier neighborhoods and have social and psychological benefits that come with having a higher income."

As I read these words I had a sinking feeling I knew where this was going, when an African-born professor of preventive medicine at Creighton University who was interviewed for the article made it all perfectly plain. "The less educated someone is," she said, "the higher their chance of dying disproportionately than the general population from diseases." Factors like poverty, socioeconomic status, jobs, income, the environment and crime favor "the White individual," the professor said. "Is this the fault of the White person? No. It's just the structure."

And there it was... The storyline I knew in my gut was coming; the story I've been hearing versions of all my life: It's not 'racism' and 'White privilege' that's to blame for Blacks being poor, ill-educated and unhealthy, "It's just the structure."

...And after generations of having it pounded into our heads we can all fill in the words and finish the story: African Americans need to exercise more 'personal responsibility', show more initiative, and work harder to 'improve' themselves.

Coming from a virtually all-Black

society, the African-born professor can be forgiven, I suppose, for not fully understanding the pervasive and pernicious racism that Blacks in America face 24/7 from cradle to grave. But honestly, folks, let's be real. In a White majority country that from its founding has written all of the rules (and is still writing them), how do you separate the "structure" from the "Whites"? As the Black French West Indies psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon said 60 years ago, you are rich because you are White, and you are White because you are rich. In racist apartheid and colonial systems, all of the White settlers lived better than the Indigenous Natives in Africa and other colonized continents. Those same privileged structures still exist in White America today.

More credible indicators than "high school graduation rates"—such as wealth, income, homeownership and so forth—reveal the racial gaps in a country that reaped over 300-years-worth of slave and Jim Crow labor from a systematically subjugated African American populace. But what the graduation data itself fails to illustrate is that within these still often segregated education systems mere 'completion' does not indicate quality. When you have racist educators, who offer internal dual educational courses for specified groups, the outcomes are predictable. All you have to do is look at the racial make-up of virtually any 'honors course' to see the pattern of apartheid education.

Some years ago, one of my White colleagues told me that she was able to get free tuition in graduate school because her White advisor informed her that if she became a student assistant, the college would pay for her tuition

and books. She came from a family that had a six-figure income. When I asked if her White professor/advisor gave that secret coded information to Students of Color, she said she did not know. And her case, sadly, is not the exception. The aforementioned “structure” enables Whites—by their privileged status—to work the system and avail themselves of its goodies and perks in a way Students of Color simply cannot... All of which only serves to perpetuate the educational (and, by extension, the income and health) gaps we’re seeing now.

Under current trends, it’s projected it will take about 240 years for African Americans to narrow the wealth gap with Whites. Impeded by these institutional, ‘structural’ barriers, there is no way African Americans can compete academically. No matter how hard we try, racially insensitive educators will not properly teach Students of Color in their White-biased institutions. Just as in dealing with racist judges and law enforcement officials, African Americans will not get a fair break or be given the opportunity to grow as persons within systems that profit off their misery (and/or demise). The State of Nebraska’s recent decision to build a new prison (despite decreasing crime rates) reveals what a ‘cash cow’ the incarceration industry is in this state—and how much government means to continue profiting off the backs of African Americans and other Non-Whites.

In fairness to the reporter, I should note that the article does acknowledge the larger problem of “systemic racism”. Dr. Jasmine Marcelin, an assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, specifically referenced the impact of “weathering”—a term she said is used to describe “the daily stress and impact of structural racism on individuals of color” who regularly have to deal with everything from “microaggressions” to “overt racism”.

Unfortunately, the ‘educational remedies’ proposed in the remainder of the article have a very spotty track record of success and fall woefully short of what’s needed to bring about concrete change (...change that will spare Black people

from having to see Confederate flags paraded through the National Capitol during Trump-incited White supremacist insurrections.)

Lisa Roy, who is the director for program development for Buffett Early Childhood Institute at UNO, was quoted in the article as saying that “Early childhood education can help close the gap in education outcomes.” That’s all well and good. But we’ve had Head Start programs for over 60 years and The Buffett Early Childhood Institute has been around for over 15 years. Is there any evidence to demonstrate that the ‘educational gap’ has narrowed?

The *World-Herald* article concluded with a statement from the Nebraska Department of Education that “state officials are working to address those gaps in a variety of ways, including providing extra support for low-performing schools.” The reporter however failed to ask a critical follow-up question: Since the department is state-funded and has been in existence for almost 70 years, what specific tasks have they undertaken... what achievements can they point to?

What I can tell you is that many African Americans in Nebraska are not impressed. They resent that Nebraska Department of Education officials have rarely traveled to North or South Omaha to talk with residents in the community, and that there is virtually no ‘grass-tops’ or parental representation from their feeding grounds. They’re also fed up that half a century after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech at the “March on Washington” they’re still having to daily put up with this crap.

Closing the educational gap between Whites and People of Color will never occur without direct face-to-face engagement with the affected communities and far-greater diversity in educational hiring. Unless schools and districts are populated with multi-cultural staff—from teachers all the way up to administrators—‘multi-cultural education’ is a rhetorical deceit... And we will never close the educational or any other gap before this country devolves into chaos once and for all.

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# Finding & Evaluating Choices for Responsible Investing

by Tyler Mainquist

Building on my previous essay which provided an overview, this one discusses options when an investor wants to avoid destructive products or industries; or when supporting companies that are working to address system problems.

The easiest way to find suitable investment choices is to consult a financial professional, since they should have additional tools (more on that below). Resources do exist for individual investors, however; most are for mutual funds and exchange traded funds (ETF) as opposed to individual companies. In all cases, please remember that investment decisions should also include your time horizon, your tolerance for risk, and the intended purpose of the money being invested.

## Morningstar.com

This free website provides access to their vast database. For decades Morningstar has been assigned a fund 'star rating' ranked against its peers in the same asset category (e.g., 'large cap growth') over the past 3 years, 5 years, etc. Morningstar now has a 'globe rating'; a higher score indicates that a fund has more assets invested in companies that score well in the Sustainalytics ESG methodology. In both cases, they divide funds into five groups along a bell curve distribution, with the best scores receiving 5 stars or globes.

Therefore, an optimal fund to look for may be 5 stars and 5 globes. In practice, not so obvious. The free site has limited search options; more for inspecting a fund that you already know about. The Sustainalytics methodology is but one way to evaluate the data: financial reports

have been standardized for easy comparisons across companies and industries; the same is not yet true for sustainability data. Finally, the globe ratings primarily apply to equity funds, which leaves out bonds, etc. It is still an excellent resource, and Morningstar's sustainability team has been doing great work.

## FossilFreeFunds.com

This site from the nonprofit "As You Sow" was one of the first to collect and report whether a fund held oil and coal companies. They assign an overall grade from 'A' to 'F' and the display quickly shows whether a fund holds any of the worst offenders in the "Carbon Underground 200" or the "Macroclimate 30". They have a search function to specify factors and find the highest scorers. As You Sow publishes similar sites for



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military weapons, the prison industrial complex, and others. Their grades are subjective, but they do show the data behind them.

### Professional Resources

The last couple of years have also seen rapid development of screening tools within the financial industry. The largest firms have proprietary systems for their brokers. Additional tools are being rolled out for independent advisors because of the demand/supply of sustainability criteria. Calvert recently released their "Transparency Tool" which provides us with key financial and sustainability data on one report, with the ability to compare several funds at once. Their dataset includes more asset classes and more funds than the public sites. Change Finance not only has a sustainable ETF, they created a report to summarize the sustainability of an overall portfolio. And a startup called YourStake uses data analytics to show the potential impact of choices, such as how many (virtual) cars

your specific investments can take off the road, or the volume of penalties paid by companies in your portfolio compared to average.

A drawback of the public sites is that the scores do not reflect the 'intent' of a fund. While an indication of current holdings is better than nothing, unless its prospectus constrains it, a well-scoring fund could invest in a dirty polluter if it met its other criteria. Thankfully, both the Morningstar and FossilFreeFunds sites display whether a fund has a sustainability mandate. Similarly, a fund may obtain a small investment in a company so that they have the right to interact with management, help educate them, and if necessary bring actions to try to change their behavior. In this case, the goal is not owning a company for its financial potential; yet that stake would still negatively impact the fund's grade. Some fund companies specialize in such shareholder activism; others prefer to totally exclude offending companies.

As advised previously, potential investors should "Know What You [want to] Own." Feel free to contact me with questions, or watch for additional information in the future. I can be reached at [tmainquist@aicinvest.com](mailto:tmainquist@aicinvest.com) (preferred), or call 402-423-4022, or text 402-227-8314.

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It's been over 15 years since the Prairie Peace Park near Pleasant Dale, Nebraska closed its doors. Through its outdoor displays, the park sought to portray "how the world can develop in peace". Park co-founder Don Tilley who has been a faithful member of Nebraskans for Peace for almost our entire existence still today regularly reminds us that despite all the gloom we're witnessing in the world, humanity has made enormous advances towards Peace & Justice. Below are texts from just two Prairie Peace Park displays about "Entrenched violent practices we are overcoming..." that bear remembering.

### **SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN**

Being a woman is being a second-class citizen. It means trying twice as hard for half the reward. It means teaching the men who will be your supervisors. It means earning less than males with less education.

### **HOPE**

Women's movements around the world have shown the true worth of women and created a climate for their empowerment.

### **EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

Until the 1800s, parents thought it necessary to practice physical punishment to force obedience. It was thought to be all right to beat their child into submission... During the 1800s, children were forced to work long hours in sweat shops and many died young. Children had no rights.

### **HOPE**

The blatant exploitation of child labor in the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s was ended by the enactment of Child Labor Laws. Children are now recognized to be human beings with rights of their own.

# HARD TRUTH, conclusion

by Marrying the Wrong Man. Despite the obvious drawbacks of an unsuitable marriage and having to make up from scratch an entirely new life, I do not regret my move, because it meant I did not go back to live in the South.

If you have not lived in the South, you cannot know the South. I personally love the South though I cannot live there myself. Some of the people I love best in the world live in the South and would live nowhere else. Indeed many—maybe even MOST—White Southerners would live nowhere else. Even liberal Southerners feel this way. “Why on Earth would I want to go live with a lot of Yankees?”

The truth is that Southern culture is deeply caste driven, beginning with demanding that toddlers address their elders as Ma’am and Miss (from Madam and Mistress), as Mister (Master) and Sir (Sire). Even liberal Southerners feel themselves superior, never mind the middle and the poor (so long as they can look down on People of Color)—in manners, in cuisine, in language, in friendship, family and values—and look down on the rest of the USA. Exceptions to this rule are Old Guard Civil Rights, anti-war and union folks, and in any case almost invariably brown of skin.

Think Israel and Palestine. Palestinians have never forgotten that they are a people, wherever they are. Likewise the South, in place or in diaspora. The Trumpy Confederacy, if you like. Trump, the GOP and rightwing media have empowered these people, in every state now—impossible to contain or create a Confederate homeland or reservations. Without some national accounting, and a lot of commitment to peace and reconciliation work by communities and individuals, we could still be headed for a long stretch of insurrection.

## Hard Truth #2

The coup-makers must face consequences. If we are to be a society governed by law, justice must be pursued. Let the mills of justice take as long as they take, just so long as the job gets done.

Those responsible for the failed coup of January 6, 2021, are likewise caste-driven—Rupert Murdoch (FOX media), Karl Rove, Rush Limbaugh, the Kochs, Donald Trump, Republican leadership at national and state levels all the way back to Reagan, White Supremacists, religious nationalists (those last two have overlap but are not identical), Heritage Foundation true-believers who want to disempower/defund/destabilize the U.S. government so the bottom 90 percent cannot use that government to level the playing field and control the excesses of the richest families and corporations, QAnon and the webs of conspiracy, and foreign states/actors which want to destabilize the US, period. Not incidentally social media giants apparently could have short-circuited Trump (and to some extent QAnon) at any time.

One would really love to be a stinging fly on the wall when Rupert Murdoch meets his Maker, which odds are won’t be long now. May his karma ripen swiftly. Namaste.

To quote my good friend “Anonymous”, “GOP members of the House and Senate... conspired via their vote against accepting the Electoral College vote/report, [and thereby they] committed sedition/treason against the Constitution and America, and deserve no wiggle room to distract/divert/spin to pretend this was about ‘policy’ differences. This was a damn insurrection led by Trump and facilitated by the GOP to create a slingshot dictatorship!

“They have to pay, end of story, full stop! These jerks are not ‘patriots’! They are traitors! GOP members of Congress went back to the floor and voted against the Electoral College certification of the vote confirming Joe Biden as President-Elect! Those GOP members did that based on Trump’s and their bald-faced lies, which led to and facilitated the insurrection and attempted coup!

“These same GOP members continue to lie, even as they call for ‘unity’ and say that impeachment will be ‘divisive.’ Abso-

lutely unacceptable and ludicrous.

“Was the insurrection/coup attempt aimed at unity by trying to disavow what the majority of Americans voted for? Trump’s own Cybersecurity Chief confirmed that the 2020 election was the most secure ever and the Georgia Secretary of State confirmed the same as did Pennsylvania with the only fraud being by GOP voters. The GOP and their FOX/Limbaugh enablers need to be called out for blatantly using and spewing those lies to demean our election system so they could ultimately try to hijack it.”

## Hard Truth #3

The failed coup may yet prove to be a crucible moment for Americans. On June 9, 1954, at the pinnacle of anti-communist fears and witchhunts, lawyer Joseph Welch, testifying for the U.S. Army, asked extreme rightwing Senator Joe McCarthy, “Have you no sense of decency?”

My other good friend “Anonymous” (no relation) shared this:

“There are three stages to the adoption of the truth. In the first stage, the truth is ridiculed. In the second stage, the truth is fought. In the third stage, the truth is adopted by all as self-evident.”

The failed coup of January 6, 2021, has forced many—both people in power, and even some of Trump’s base—to admit perhaps for the first time the terrible dysfunction of this administration. Too often it takes a great shock to change minds enough to create historic change.

Those whose eyes have opened, and now social media too, have been forced to admit that the truth matters, indeed that untruth risks the very foundation of our Democracy.

In the face of the greatest internal threat to our government since the Eighteen Sixties, magnified by the here-to-fore unknown power of social media, culminating in the U.S. Capitol attack, our Democracy has survived. So far.

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# HARD TRUTH

*by Sally Herrin*

## Averted: A Slingshot Dictatorship

### Hard Truth #1

The South has risen again. As far as Dixie is concerned the Civil War isn't over. On the contrary, the country music cohort through talk radio and Murdoch media have fashioned themselves a culture and a people in diaspora. Monuments and flags? Respect for history, my Aunt Eldrane! The Confederate flag means today what it always meant.

The South is another country. I am not

being metaphorical. My family moved from the Great Lakes region in 1963 to Atlanta. I was twelve then and I never lived outside (I include Southern Indiana for cause) the South until 1976, when I washed up in Lincoln, Nebraska driving northwest on Highway 2, over the Cheney ridge, before me Salt Valley and the Capitol bleaching in the August afternoon. "Wow. What a beat little prairie town," I thought. "Good thing I'm not going to spend the rest of my life here."

Two years later I was due to graduate and return to the South to marry my childhood sweetheart and get my doctorate at the University of North Carolina, where Doris Betts and James Dickey would have promoted my development and success. Instead, like Mari Sandoz before me, I made an unsuitable marriage to the handsomest cowboy in Cherry County.

In so doing I placed myself beyond saving by the Childhood Sweetheart forever