



Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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World Faces Climate Refugee Crisis

Introduction and transcription by Marilyn McNabb

Journalist and scholar Christian Parenti delivered the 2018 Annual Peace Conference keynote speech at the University of Nebraska at Kearney September 22 on “The Current and Future Crisis of Global Climate Refugees.” As his authoritative presentation deserves the broadest possible audience, a lightly edited version of his keynote address and also his panel and workshop remarks is being featured in both this Nebraska Report and the forthcoming November/December issue.

In introducing Dr. Parenti at the conference, Professor Will Avilés, Chair of the UNK Department of Political Science, referenced Parenti’s groundbreaking 2011

book, Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence, which describes global patterns of how climate change is already causing violence over scarce resources and forcing refugees from their homes. He also noted Parenti’s skill in identifying the interrelationship of issues, including environmental, climate and social justice, sustainable energy, globalization, American economic and environmental history, and political violence.

Parenti has reported from Iraq, Afghanistan, various parts of Africa and Latin America for publications including the Nation, the New York Times and Fortune magazine. He is an Associate Professor of Economics at John Jay College in New York City.

Scientists have been pretty clear for a long time that there are tipping points in the earth’s climate system and that 350 parts per million (ppm) of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) in the atmosphere is the threshold, after which the problem of climate change can very easily become self-compounding. Before that point, the main drivers of global warming were civilization—burning fossil fuels, loading the atmosphere with CO2. But after the 350 ppm threshold (we’re now at 405 ppm of CO2 equivalent in the atmosphere), the danger is at a certain point the heating is so intense that the systems that are currently able to stabilize climate—the Boreal forest in the North, the Tropical forest in the South—collapse, break down, start dying, and then become net emitters of CO2. The great fear is that the permafrost in the Arctic melts and the methane trapped beneath it comes billowing out. And methane is a greenhouse gas more than 20 times as powerful as CO2 but doesn’t last as long in the atmosphere. So part of the problem is pulling back from whatever the threshold is, from really going to the point of no return.

The good news is as long as we are the main problem, we still have the power to change the source of energy for our factories, change the way we farm and raise food—the problem is still within

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Nebraska Report

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How is climate change expressing itself already as a refugee crisis? In many ways, but rarely does climate change cause conflict or refugee flows or any of these other social problems in isolation. So what I argue in Tropic of Chaos is for what I call “catastrophic convergence”—a combination of bad economic policies, bad military policies and the onset of climate change.

our control. Once the Boreal Forests are massively burning and the permafrost is melting, then it's going to be much harder to deal with.

How do we know this? From decades and decades of research. For about 30 years or more, there have been about 14 different major climate models and we now have the ability to see what those models predicted. These models have been more right than wrong. What they're predicting for the future is not a slow, linear increase in temperature, but rather that the causes build up, and the effects lag, and then kick in all at once. So the suggestion is the earth's

climate system is not so much on a dial that turns from cool to hot. It's more like a light switch. When the pressure builds up, the effects of that pressure kick in and the lights go out. So it's imperative that we really start dealing with the underlying problem.

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The Stakes We're Facing

The following excerpts are from Dr. Christian Parenti's article "If We Fail," published in the Summer 2017 issue of the political quarterly Jacobin.

The effects of climate change are already upon us. Here's what the 2020s and 2030s will look like if we fail to change things.

The climate crisis is often imagined as a sudden, all-encompassing, simultaneous collapse in which agriculture fails, the seas flood in, disease spreads, and human civilization crumbles into Hobbesian war of all against all. But in reality, some crises will appear more immediately and others will take a long time to arrive, and if we act with speed and purpose some can still be avoided.

In the near term, perhaps starting in the 2020s or 2030s, the foremost problem will probably be a new climate-driven urban crisis of disinvestment, abandonment, and depopulation caused by rising sea levels and large inundating storms...

Here Comes the Ocean

Even if we drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions and stripped CO₂ from the atmosphere so as to stabilize temperature increases at no more than 2°C above the 1990 baseline, we are locked in for significantly higher sea levels. Melting Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, mountain glacier loss, and the expansion of ocean water volume due to its higher temperature are driving the sea level rise.

On the east coast of the U.S., the ocean is rising three to four times faster than the global averages, which are themselves rising at an accelerating rate... By 2100, global average sea levels could be 6 to almost 9 feet higher...

Storms vs. Urban Infrastructure

The real threat is not so much the slow and steady increase of average sea

levels but rather, the major inundations caused by large storm surges... During Hurricane Sandy the storm surge that hit lower Manhattan was 9.23 feet higher than a typical high tide.

When infrastructure gets damaged, even unharmed properties that depend on the damaged electrical, transportation, and water systems lose value. A few inundations in quick succession could start a process of combined physical and socioeconomic decline. As the time and tremendous expense needed to repair water-damaged underground electric and telecoms lines, subways and rail lines, drinking water and wastewater treatment systems, and power stations becomes apparent, property owners will start panic selling.

When it becomes clear that sea walls were not constructed in time and vital infrastructure has started to collapse, property values will follow, possibly triggering broader financial panics. If properly planned for, one can imagine how such problems could be managed. But if the current denial continues until markets are caught unaware, there could be regional real estate panics and, flowing from those, major financial losses...

Collapsed property values means a collapsed tax base, which means local government will be hard pressed to make costly infrastructure repairs. And it is the infrastructure as a whole that property values depend on... Eventually, those who can will leave the coast.

What will happen in Dhaka, Lagos, Karachi, or Rio? All are megacities situated on flat terrain close to sea level in countries already in crisis, legendary for corruption and poor planning. One has to assume that as the future impacts of climate change become obvious, many more people will migrate inland or at-

tempt to go abroad.

Infrastructural Choke Points

Much industrial production and the global food system, for example, depends not only on what happens in factories and fields but also on a small number of infrastructure bottlenecks along international supply chains at key ports, airports, road and rail links, and politically sensitive maritime straits like the Panama and Suez canals.

A recent study by the British think tank Chatham House found that 55 percent of the global grain trade passes through 1 of 14 'chokepoints,' all of which are vulnerable to extreme weather like local flooding, rising sea levels, and the associated political and military conflict. Shut enough of the chokepoints and the global flow of food will be threatened...

Solutions

The good news is we have all the technologies we need to save civilization from climate collapse: solar and wind electrical grids; electric vehicles; the ability to re-wild wetlands and build artificial barriers to break and block the power of the sea. And we very well can develop the political capabilities to win over a majority behind the policies that will preserve the health and security of that majority...

Clearly the private sector and the profit motive cannot deploy enhanced weathering technology at the scale needed, nor push a rapid energy transition, nor build coastal protections at the scale and speed necessary. But none of these tasks is technically or economically impossible. The mechanism needed in each case is state action and the public sector...

No Space Force



Keep Space for Peace

Trump has announced plans for a Space Force—a separate military service which would ensure US ‘control and domination’ of space on behalf of corporate interests. China, Russia and other space-faring nations would be the targets.

Under aerospace industry pressure this proposal would necessitate massive amounts of taxpayer dollars.

We call it Pyramids to the Heavens. Congress will have final approval of Trump’s proposal.

The U.N.’s Outer Space and Moon Treaties declare that space must be preserved for all of humanity. Help us defeat plans to weaponize space. Work to protect social progress on Earth rather than a new arms race in space. #NoSpaceForce

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Bringing the ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ Process Home

On July 14th, the Lincoln NAACP and Nebraskans for Peace jointly sponsored a picnic at Trago Park in Lincoln commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of human rights legend and South African president Nelson Mandela. In addition to a speech by Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler, a panel of speakers at the picnic discussed the lengthy history of racial discrimination in our state capital that sadly continues to the day.

Much of the discussion at the picnic centered on the South African government’s employment—under Mandela’s leadership—of a “Truth and Reconciliation” process to openly face the damage caused by the country’s brutal Apartheid past. The Rev. Stephen Griffith, who moderated the panel, filed the following report on what such a process might mean for making the City of Lincoln a more tolerant, safe and welcoming community.

I thank NAACP and Nebraskans for Peace for sponsoring this event and prompting this conversation. I offer these notes a something of a record, and I hope that they remind us all not to let the discussion be simply an event.

Introduction

After Apartheid was ended in South Africa, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu employed the truth-and-reconciliation process to surface responsibility for past wrongs, to undertake restorative action, and to unify the newly desegregated nation. Since then several countries have established Truth and Reconciliation Commissions after times of conflict. And a few cities in the Western Hemisphere – such as Regina and Vancouver in Canada and Greensboro, North Carolina – have undertaken truth and reconciliation processes. The Lincoln NAACP and Nebraskans for Peace are



Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

considering undertaking such a process in Nebraska’s state capital.

The need is evident. In 1968, the Kerner Commission appointed by Lyndon Johnson issued a report in which it indicated that America was “moving toward two societies, one black, and one white—separate and unequal.”

Fifty years later, a member of the same commission, former Sen. Fred Harris of Oklahoma, and other researchers have released a follow-up to the Kerner report that provides data on what has happened since. Sen. Harris, as a co-editor of the new report and the last surviving member of the original commission, says of the updated findings: “Racial and ethnic inequality is growing worse. We’re re-segregating our housing and schools again.” He also said poverty and income inequality have worsened since the original study.

In recent years, the Lincoln “Vital Signs” reports commissioned by the Lincoln Community Foundation and

the “Place Matters” study conducted by the Community Health Endowment show that, despite many positive developments, Lincoln faces growing challenges of poverty, as well as educational, employment and health disparities. These exist city-wide, but are especially concentrated in a few census tracts corresponding to race and ethnicity, immigrant and refugee populations. The goal tonight is to start the process in which we look at the truth today about poverty, racism and injustice in Lincoln in a variety of sectors, and how begin to right historic wrongs and create a better future for coming generations.

The panel included members of the African-American, Native American, Latino, and refugee communities in Lincoln: Walter Powell, Lincoln Public Schools multicultural administrator; Rebekka Schlichting, member of the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and Assistant Director, Vision Maker Media;

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Truth & Reconciliation, conclusion

José Lemus, a community organizer with Civic Nebraska; and Natasha Naseem, a community organizer with Nebraska Applesed and Muslim rights advocate.

Each of the panelists reported experiences of racism and micro-aggression.

José: “Having to defend my presence, my existence in my own hometown.”

Natasha: “We pride ourselves on being kind, but...” her school presentation on 9/11 was sabotaged, and a teacher “trapped” her into a behavior the teacher perceived to be contrary to her religion.

Rebekka: experienced racism from other Native people in her home community.

She is bi-cultural and has experienced anger and hatred from both sides, with comments like ‘You don’t look Indian.’ “It’s difficult walking in both worlds”—the reservation and the white community.

Walter: There is not as much overt racism, but he does encounter unconscious bias. He recounted how people would see him in a store parking lot, dressed in suit and tie, and make a point of locking their cars. He also is often ignored or overlooked by clerks in stores who give attention to white customers.

The conversation turned briefly to discuss the possibility of pursuing a truth-and-reconciliation process. What might we do in Lincoln to resolve residual effects of conflict, to find a third way between retribution for overt racism and easy amnesty that leads to amnesia? What steps would be possible and effective in Lincoln?

Suggestions included:

- Show the film, “Dawnland”—a documentary about cultural survival and stolen children” inside the first truth

and reconciliation commission for Native Americans. <https://upstander-project.org/dawnland/>

- Share stories: explore ways to foster healing and support that gives space to acknowledging wounds.
- Intentional actions to overcome ignorance: e.g. share meals, share stories.
- Learn the history of another group: e.g. Islam.
- Build relationships with people of another group.
- Organize events such as a Middle East, North Africa, South Asia Community Forum.
- On Columbus Day feature programs on the history of Native Peoples in Nebraska.
- Acknowledge indigenous peoples who lived on this land before us. (Note the new statement on the front page of this Nebraska Report: “Nebraskans for Peace’s state office in Lincoln is located on land that formerly belonged to the Otoe Tribe.”)
- Create signage in public buildings announcing “You are on indigenous land.” Hire indigenous designers to create signs.
- Move beyond our comfort zones, even in small ways, such as shopping in an ethnic market.
- Nonviolence training to give people tools to move beyond anger and build peace.
- ‘Truth-telling’ forums for the public.
- Establish an educational unit on racism in Lincoln Publ

CORRECTING CORRECTIONS

Thinking Outside the Box

John Krejci, Former NFP State Board member and writer for Nebraska Criminal Justice Review

We all know the whimsical definition of insanity: Doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different outcome. I planned to apply that to the Nebraska Department of Corrections. But maybe I should look at myself. I have been pleading with the Department to increase inmate programming (anger management, substance abuse and criminal thinking), parole more inmates earlier, strengthen after-prison support (housing employment and supervision), treat inmates with respect, listen to inmates' complaints and suggestions, limit overtime for corrections' staff, demonstrate how these can save taxpayers money. I have been writing this for over 20 years. Insanity? Maybe.

Despite studies, committees, plans and lots of money, Corrections has accomplished little. I have suggested to Director Scott Frakes that he should try to "THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX." He is a sincere person, but he has been in corrections for 30-plus years. He recently appointed another sincere person, Dawn Renee Smith, as deputy director for programming. She has been in corrections most of her life too.

There is one glimmer of hope. In this age of polarization, gridlock and acrimonious accusations regarding corrections, the liberal left and the conservative right agree that we put too many people in prison (mostly poor people of color) and that it is costing us too much. Since 1980, the U.S. prison populations have grown from a few hundred thousand to over 2.2 million. This is partly due to 'get tough on crime' laws, mandatory minimum sentences, and harsh sentences for crack cocaine. In Nebraska, we have attempted to build ourselves out of the problem with a \$120 million prison in Tecumseh and

a \$62 million jail in Lancaster County. Both are now overcrowded. We seemed to have learned our lesson, although recently we spent \$25 million for expanded community corrections in Lincoln. This will keep Nebraska from having the most overcrowded prison in the nation. Currently, we are #2 at 155% capacity!

Present efforts, although well meaning, have produced low morale, high violence,

most inmates will be released in 2.7 years anyway. And many are serving short sentences for low-level drug offenses, DUI, and other nonviolent crimes such as forgery, bad checks, etc. Many need treatment in the community, not incarceration. If the Department of Corrections would invest some of their \$250 million budget in aftercare: supervision, aid in housing and job search, alcohol and drug treatment—everyone would be much



high staff turnover, oppression of inmates, no reduction of prison population, inadequate programming—I could go on. Recent efforts to recruit and retain more staff and pay them more are not succeeding either.

Rather than increase staff, we need to reduce the prison population. The legislature passed a law that if prison population is not below 140 percent capacity by 2020 the governor must declare a state of emergency and release about 1,000 inmates. Sounds really scary! But the fact of the matter is that

better off.

True, some money has been allocated for training and education for former inmates and many community groups are working with them. But a comprehensive program of halfway houses should be established statewide, providing supervision, psychological support in job and housing search, in addition to appropriate treatment and programming.

Another flicker of hope comes from the ACLU, which, besides suing the Department

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What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

'White Extinction Anxiety,' False Walls and a Common Destiny

Charles Blow wrote recently in the *New York Times* that reaction to migration in the United States is rooted in white-race anxiety over being overwhelmed—which also propels support for Donald Trump. Viewed through the lens of racism, that's certainly part of it. In the longer run, however, it's not just 'white' people who may need to worry about going extinct. There's the matter of a sustainable future for every animate creature

tion policy," wrote Blow. "This is at the core: White extinction anxiety, white displacement anxiety, white minority anxiety. White people have been the majority of people considered United States citizens since this country was founded, but that period is rapidly drawing to a close, First, for the first time since the Census Bureau has released these annual statistics, they show an absolute decline in the nation's white non-Hispanic population—accelerating a phenomenon that

commented that: "All manner of current policy grows out of this panic over loss of privilege and power: immigration policy, voter suppression, Trump economic isolationist impulses, his contempt for people from Haiti and Africa, the Muslim ban, his rage over Black Lives Matter and social justice protests. Everything."

Much the same can be said of nationalist movements in much of Europe, including "Brexit" in Great Britain, neo-fascism in Italy, neo-Nazism in Germany,



Unfortunately, many people are too deeply obsessed with racial, religious and nationalistic biases to even imagine what nature has in store for all of us. If we don't pay more attention to what we share than what divides us, we'll all eventually go extinct.

on this Earth that ought to be bothering all of us. Unfortunately, many people are too deeply obsessed with racial, religious and nationalistic biases to even imagine what nature has in store for all of us. If we don't pay more attention to what we share than what divides us, we'll all eventually go extinct.

A Majority Minority Society

"Strip all the other rationales away from this [Trump's] draconian immigra-

was not projected to occur until the next decade." The same report added that, for the first time, more children are now being born in the United States who are minorities than who are white, at every age from zero to nine.

Another report, authored by the University of Wisconsin's Applied Population Lab, added at about the same time that during 2016, more European-Americans died than were born in 26 of the 50 United States—more than at any previous period in U.S. history. Blow

a right-wing surge in Poland, and similar movements that now play an important role in Hungary and Austria. Germany alone has absorbed more than 800,000 migrants within a few years.

Race, Religion, and Nationalism

In a century, perhaps, historians may ask why obsessions regarding race, religion and nationalism played such an important role in our thinking (and conflict) today. All are preventing us from

Pull the Lobbying Lever of Power to Stop Climate Change

Mark Welsch, NFP Omaha Coordinator and Co-Leader of Citizens' Climate Lobby—Omaha Chapter

You can use the 'lobbying lever of power' at any time, on any issue. Today I urge you to use it to stop climate change. It is easy, doesn't take more than a few minutes and most importantly: it is effective. I heard a pundit on a radio talk show say that for every call received in a Senator's office, they assume 1,000 voters think the same thing. Your call right before the election has a bigger impact than at any other time of the year.

If you are concerned about our changing climate, there is nothing better to relieve your stress than to take action. You already know why you think it is a bad thing, so tell someone—someone who can actually do something to make it stop. They would be one, two or all three of your Members of Congress (MOC).

Contact information for Nebraska's MOCs is listed on page 6, but you can find your MOC, no matter where you live in the U.S., by going to the Citizens' Climate Lobby's website: cclusa.org/call (Just enter your address and zip code.) It will show you their names and phone numbers in D.C. When done with your call, you can tell CCL that you helped by clicking "CALLED". It really helps us if we know how many calls are made to each office.

Please call them today—right now is a good time. Most offices have answering machines to take your message if it is after normal working hours. You could say something like this:

Hi. This is [YOUR NAME], I'm a constituent and voter calling from [YOUR ADDRESS, CITY AND STATE]. My phone number is _____.

I want Senator/Representative _____ and all of Congress to make addressing climate change a key issue this year because [insert your own reasons here].

This is just the beginning of your growing power. Now you can get ready to call your legislators on November 9th. On November 9th please call your MOC to ask them to enact a carbon fee and dividend law to pave the way for CCL's November 13 Lobby Day in D.C.

Someone Pulled Their Lobbying Lever of Power

Steve Valk, Communications Director for Citizens' Climate Lobby

I'm still blown away by the turn of events and the political drama that played out in real time before our eyes.

My biggest takeaway is the power that people have when they talk to members of Congress face-to-face. I truly believe that Republican Sen. Jeff Flake moved for an FBI investigation regarding Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh because of the encounter he had with sexual assault survivors just before the Judiciary vote. Though passionate and

emotional (as one would expect), the women were not disrespectful—no name-calling or expletives. Just two human beings sharing their pain, and Flake was visibly moved. He listened. He did not shut them down, and their voices were echoing in his head when he entered the committee room. In the end—he, too, being a human being—Flake did what his conscience demanded of him, even though it meant defying the will of his GOP colleagues.

This little-exercised power that people have when they speak to members of Congress is often on display when Citizens' Climate Lobby volunteers meet with their

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"Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution"

FREE MOVIE EVENT

The Citizens' Climate Lobby-Omaha Chapter, under the direction of new member Bob Kraft is hosting a free movie and panel discussion event.

Friday, October 26, 2018 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Mammel Hall Auditorium, UNO CAMPUS, 6708 Pine Street, Omaha

Come join us for a free screening of the Jamie Redford movie "Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution" and information about ways to bring about change. This is a bi-partisan experience.

Learn of multiple actions you can take to be a part of changing to a new way of energizing the world. There will be short introductions before the movie (which lasts 71 minutes) followed by a brief (about 20 minutes) Question and Answer period with our guest agencies. Citizens' Climate Lobby—Omaha Chapter is sponsoring this event. NLCV (Nebraska League of Conservation Voters), NCEF (Nebraska Conservation Educational Fund), and Nebraskans for Peace are the other experts who will tell you briefly who they are and what they do, and later answer questions.

Please come and join us for a bi-partisan evening of positive ways to change and make a difference! And don't forget to vote!

Happening trailer: <https://happeningthemovie.com/about-the-film>.

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Stop Climate Change, conclusion

Representatives and Senators on Capitol Hill or back home. The reason that 45 Republicans have joined the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus is because their constituents asked them to do it.

Our democracy is not dead. We just have to use it.

Citizens' Climate Lobby helps empower people to pull that lobbying 'lever of power.' We train citizens how to lobby in support of our Carbon Fee and Dividend proposal by building friendly relationships with our federally elected representatives. You may read more about it here: <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/carbon-fee-and-dividend/>.

Citizens' Climate Lobby Annual Conference

Mark Welsch, NFP Omaha Coordinator and Co-Leader of Citizens' Climate Lobby - Omaha Chapter

This year's Citizens' Climate Lobby conference was the largest ever with over 1400 people attending. A lot of time was spent talking about the upcoming elections from the speakers and between participants. We heard again how humans burning fossil fuels is what is causing the Earth to heat up and cause our climate to change.

Most importantly we heard how more Republicans are 'getting it.' There

are 45 Republicans and 45 Democrats in the House of Representatives who have joined the Climate Solutions Caucus. They are working together on the climate issue. Representative Don Bacon from Omaha joined this caucus a month after he was sworn into office and is an active member.

On Tuesday, our lobby day, we spread out and went to almost every Congressional office. We had respectful conversations with many elected members of Congress and their staff. We are closer than ever to having them introduce our Carbon Fee and Dividend bill.

Please help us get it introduced and passed by reading the other stories on this subject in this newspaper—and then take action with us.

WHAT'S HOT, CONCLUSION

forging real solutions to the existential threat to everyone's survival: preservation of a sustainable habitat. Perhaps future historians may muse that some of us experienced fear of the wrong people for the wrong reasons, along lines of conflict that endure from a time when human beings were not the overwhelming influence of the planet's destiny that we are today—that is, before fossil fuels provided unprecedented power, prosperity and peril.

Some of us still do not realize that we all share the same atmosphere, the same problems, and the same destiny—even those who deny that a problem exists. A gated community will not keep it out. No wall will screen it out (unless, as in the movie "Elysium," the uber-privileged migrate off-planet).

More people are sharing less arable land that is more often being devastated by nature brutalized by rising levels of greenhouse gases. At the same time, inequity of wealth is accelerating, creat-

ing more political, economic and climate refugees. More than 65 million people are now ranging the world homeless, whether escaping gangs in Central America or the destruction of farmland in Syria. Climate change is often a 'trigger mechanism' that makes everything else worse, as migration increases, in a vicious cycle.

Common Destiny or Common Demise

For example, drought and rising temperatures in Guatemala are making it more difficult for people to survive, most notably as coffee rust (*la roya*) becomes more widespread. "We can't make a living purely off coffee anymore," one young farmer told Lauren Markham in the *New York Times*. Young people either move to the cities amid the gang violence, or to the United States.

A third of the world's refugees (a record high) have been forced from their homes because of environmental degra-

ation or climate change, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Markham wrote, "This includes tragedies like the widespread famine in Darfur, monsoons and flooding in Bangladesh and the catastrophic hurricane [Maria] in Puerto Rico. The more out of whack our climate becomes, the more people... leave their homes. As our world heats up and sea levels rise, the problem of forced migration around the world is projected to become far worse." Thus, denying climate change, Trump and Company are aggravating illegal immigration.

El Salvador, one of the world's most murderous countries, has been experiencing drought that has devastated its agricultural infrastructure, even as an expanding Sahel in Africa prompts thousands of people to seek new homes in Europe. Yemen, Syria and other countries also are suffering drought, with similar effects on out-migration.

"If President Trump really wants to curb 'illegal' migration to the United States for the long haul, he'd better get serious about climate change," wrote Markham. "The Trump Administration can continue to eviscerate the E.P.A. and thumb its nose at global efforts to protect the climate. Or he can work responsibly to try to curb international migration by addressing the challenges of a warming planet."

We will realize and deal with our common destiny, or meet a common demise.

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Your Foundation Speaks

by **Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President**

Your Nebraska Peace Foundation has chosen to invest in the common stock of NextEra Energy and NextEra Energy Partners. They are the world's largest generators of renewable energy from wind and sun. All dividends from these stocks go to support the educational expenses of Nebraskans for Peace.

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Climate Refugee Crisis, conclusion

of bad economic policies, bad military policies and the onset of climate change. The bad economic policies are free market fundamentalism that holds that all government involvement in the economy is bad, and that every state, every country in the world should be removing any kind of government participation: every subsidy, every tariff, any form of public ownership of industries should be done away with and privatized. And that's been the official position of the U.S. and most of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries for at least 30 years and has been forced on one developing

weakened the economies of countries and also distorted the states.

So you have in places throughout the world this combination of economic restructuring, plus increased violence due to military adventures, coming together in the form of increased poverty and violence, coming together on a stage that's been pre-set for crisis with expressions of climate change as extreme weather, increased drought, increased flooding.

What you see in most parts of the world is not a decrease in precipitation, but actually an increase in precipitation. More rain has fallen, even as it frequently feels on the ground like it's drought,

we are locked in for, and we are locked in for serious changes. Even under the best case scenario, if the lights went out tomorrow and another gasoline motor was never turned on, there would still be a considerable amount of sea-level rise and changes of precipitation patterns and increased desertification and increased warming for decades and decades to come. So we are locked in for serious changes as it is.

And adaptation refers to both physical adaptation, like building bio-shields, retreating from the sea to allow mangrove swamps to regrow to protect those areas, or building seawalls around cities



In the climate discussion, there's the ideas of mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation means dealing with the underlying problems—getting off of fossil fuels, stopping greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation means adapting to the changes we are locked in for, and we are locked in for serious changes...

country after another and is part of what causes the refugee crisis. Because what it has achieved—this process of neo-liberal economic restructuring that has been pushed on one country after another—the net result is the government, the state in these countries, is reduced to a hollow, often quite corrupt shell. It's incapable, even if it wished, to deal with the climate crisis.

The other problem that feeds into this is military policy. The U.S. has been pursuing aggressive interventionist policies for decades. We're not the only country that does that, but we have by far the biggest military on the planet. So that, too, has really weakened the social fabric,

because the rain is coming all at once and at the wrong times. And so the rainy season for the farmers in places like Kenya or Afghanistan, or the monsoon in India, is out of whack... and people experience it as drought. But actually, as compared to 30 years ago, there's more precipitation—it's just happening at the wrong time and all at once, so you can't use the water. And the water is scouring the earth, causing erosion.

In the climate discussion, there's the ideas of mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation means dealing with the underlying problems—getting off of fossil fuels, stopping greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation means adapting to the changes

that can't rely on bio-shields, like New York City. But adaptation also refers to social policies. How are we to deal with the fact that millions of people are going to be on the move? Millions of people *are* on the move. And adaptation can have what I would consider positive or negative forms. And unfortunately, what we're seeing is a lot of negative adaptation already.

In terms of the refugee crisis, we're currently witnessing the worst refugee crisis since WWII. The U.N. said there were 68.5 million refugees at the end of 2017. In that year only 100,000 had been officially resettled, so a lot of these people are living without social benefits, without the right to work, as second-class citizens, housed in camps. The epicenter

...Even under the best case scenario, if the lights went out tomorrow and another gasoline motor was never turned on, there would still be a considerable amount of sea-level rise and changes of precipitation patterns and increased desertification and increased warming for decades and decades to come. So we are locked in for serious changes as it is.

of this is in Europe and the Mediterranean. Most people are coming from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, crossing the Mediterranean. This year the number of people who have died trying to cross the Mediterranean is just shy of 2,000. About 50,000 people have landed, which is a pretty high death rate. That's around 3 percent.

The main countries holding the largest refugee populations are Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, Lebanon, Iran, Bangladesh, Sudan—countries that are not prepared for huge populations of hungry and desperate people.

The only Western European countries that have accepted lots of refugees are Germany and Sweden. All the European countries have accepted some. Already we're seeing a very serious racist backlash throughout Europe... In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats are a Nazi Party. They just won 18 percent of the vote. They're the third-largest party. Similarly for Germany. The Alternative for Germany are very right-wing and won 13 percent of the vote. In many European countries, fascist parties are the second or third party. In Greece, Golden Dawn has been bumped from second to third party. In France, Le Pen's party, the Rally National, is essentially the second party and very likely will take power at some point.

How are we to see this as adaptation? Taking Syria as an example. Syria was under pressure from the West to liberalize its economy. It's where the Ba'ath Party was formed, as a Pan-Arab

National Socialist Party. It's not fair to call it fascistic: it was always a mix of left and right. Saddam Hussein was a Baathist. And they believed in a heavy state presence in the economy. So Iraq is overthrown by the U.S.—we all know that story. It becomes basically a semi-failed state in a permanent state of war. Syria is maintaining law and order—a functioning society throughout much of that. Many Syrians go off to fight. Lots of Muslim volunteers travel to fight in Iraq, many of them go through Syria. There's lots of weapons trafficking along the Euphrates River. Then as a sort of stability takes hold in parts of Iraq, many of these fighters get pushed back into Syria.

Syria is a majority Sunni country. Iraq is actually a majority Shiite country but under Saddam and before that had a minority Sunni leadership. In Syria, the ruling clique are Alawite, they're related

to Shia Islam.

So, many of these veterans are coming back and these guns are coming back into Syria around 2008-2011. And as the "Arab Spring" jumps off, Syria starts experiencing really intense historic droughts. At the very same time, in an effort to curry favor with the West, the Assad regime is finally liberalizing its economy. Part of that entails withdrawing supports for Sunni farmers—subsidized irrigation, crop insurance—just as they're facing this extreme weather. So they're forced to leave the land. They come into the cities. They're unemployed, poor and desperate. They are greeted by religious activists who try to organize them and their grievances along religious lines. Protests begin that have a religious character that immediately turn violent. And the civil war breaks out.

So at first glance it looks like this is a religious civil war. No. It has deeper underlying roots. Some of them are environmental, some of them are these economic policies pushed by the West, some of them are the result of bad foreign policies made by the U.S. to collapse the neighboring state. And the civil war has been raging on ever since. Over a million Syrians have left and many more are displaced within Syria. So that's an example of how this stuff plays out. It can be pretty hard to locate the climatological aspect of it, but that doesn't mean it's not there.

(To be continued in the November/December Nebraska Report)

In terms of the refugee crisis, we're currently witnessing the worst refugee crisis since WWII. The U.N. said there were 68.5 million refugees at the end of 2017. In that year only 100,000 had been officially resettled, so a lot of these people are living without social benefits, without the right to work, as second-class citizens, housed in camps.

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CORRECTIONS, conclusion

for cruel and inhumane treatment of inmates resulting from overcrowding, has a revolving fund to lower the population of county jails. Many poor persons, unable to post bail, are spending an average of 76 days in jail, waiting for trial. Others are warehoused because they cannot pay fines. This disrupts families and costs taxpayers money. Senator Matt Hansen of Lincoln has passed legislation encouraging judges to grant probation or community service to this same end. However, this helps county jails—not the state's prisons.

The parole board should cease denying parole due to inmates' inability to complete 'required' programming. Anger management and substance abuse programming have 400 to 500 inmates on waiting lists. At any one time, over 1,000 inmates are eligible for parole.

Reinstating the 'open yard' policy will

lessen inmate frustration and cut down on violence.

Recently the Inspector General for prisons, Doug Koebernick, issued his annual report with numerous recommendations to remediate the problems. It is an excellent analysis of these issues. It can be found on the Nebraska.gov website. On September 12 of this year, the *Lincoln Journal Star* had an excellent article summarizing some of the issues.

A coalition of stakeholders—including corrections, members of the legislature, probation, parole, law enforcement, judges, mental health professionals, inmates and community members—should be re-established. Governor Heineman disbanded the "Community Corrections Council" a few years ago and more recently Governor Ricketts failed to support a similar group organized by

the "Council on State Governments" (CSG). Consequently the recommendations made by CSG have not been adequately implemented. And the cross-fertilization of ideas of these stakeholders has been greatly diminished.

Besides educating ourselves as community activists, we can follow prison legislation and perhaps testify before the Judiciary Committee. NFP State Board member Tessa Foreman keeps track of legislation for the organization (nfp.tessa@gmail.com). Pastor Bob Bryan works full time with the prison (Bob.Bryan@nebraskasynod.org); write him for suggestions. And NFP member Jean Eden is coordinating visits to inmates (jeanleden@gmail.com). I write for the quarterly "Nebraska Criminal Justice Review." If you want to receive issues, write ncjr@creighton.edu. Finally, some inmates rarely receive letters and would benefit from the social contact.

Meanwhile, I'll keep claiming to be sane but continue advocating prison reform.

HARD TRUTH, conclusion

Oligarchy and the authoritarian regimes which make the world safe for oligarchs are rising steadily around the world. I have written elsewhere that the same impulse that elected Obama (an increasingly desperate feeling of the need for change) served also, by means of the long-past-its-sell-by-date Electoral College, to put Trump in the White House.

Many of us underestimated the depth of horror with which the right-wing Thirty Percent regarded the Obama years—when a black man rescued the world economy AND the banking industry (though not as many homeowners as should have been done), when the spectrum of gender, human sexuality and new family patterns burst open every closet (somehow ‘ruining’ marriage for straight white people), when the U.S. was moving forward on climate change, and the Renewable Fuels Standard returned a profit in the marketplace to rural America. Sadly, we failed to understand that Obama was not the dawn of a golden age, but the sunset on any immediate hope that might have been. Consider me disabused.

The Dow Jones Industrial average, which every school child is taught is the number by which we score the health of the economy, hit a historic high just before the Autumn Equinox, but the household incomes of the highest brackets are the ONLY households where family income is rising. For the aggregate Ninety Percent of the rest of us—working people, seniors and children—family income is only just recovering from the Recession now.

There is not an institution of federal government that the One Percent has not worked to weaponize against the Ninety Percent: the Electoral College (built by the way on the bones of Slavery, as a way to give extra power to rural Southern states, another gift that has kept on giving down the years) and gerrymandering; the Supreme Court and the “Citizens United” decision that makes corporations persons and turns money into speech; the gridlock in Congress wrought through the Obama years by the GOP, in order to PROVE to people that government cannot be made to work on behalf of the common good. Even charitable giving, by which billions of dollars

are diverted into foundations—just a third of which goes to help the actual poor while the rest helps to shape the country’s agenda inside and outside government—divert millions and millions of dollars of tax revenue away from federal coffers which by rights the wealthiest OUGHT to contribute as their fair share.

OF COURSE the angels can’t get to sleep. The devil is doing business all night long.

In fact, the wicked have grown so strong that they no longer find it necessary to pretend to moral high ground. The meme of the week just past is “All politicians lie.” And the right-wing Thirty Percent—the “some of the people” whom the One Percent *can* fool all the time—thinks that’s just fine.

To be clear, WE the decent Americans, the truly patriotic citizens, are all we have (though we are many—between 40 and 60 percent by my entirely non-scientific lifelong observations and we are on the right side of history). We are citizens, I repeat, not just taxpayers. Citizens build great institutions like public power and libraries, thriving towns and sustainable economies. Citizens understand the value of the arts and of wild places, of bridges and health care and schools. Citizens are proud to provide and protect these blessings in our communities.

The One Percent meanwhile have spent fortunes convincing Americans that we are merely tax-payers, whiners who grudge every penny and fail completely to understand the principle of common well-being. Our best and only chance to avert the kind of dystopia the comix have been warning us about for the past half century at least, is to climb back on the only horse we have to ride—our somewhat damaged but still functioning democracy.

In July 2018, political website *Indivisible* posted, “If we treat voting as an expression of virtue or personal principle, we will lose. If we demand perfection from our candidates, we will lose. If we impose single-issue purity tests on our candidates, we will lose. And if we stay home, surely we will lose.”

This is the most important election in this country in my lifetime. We need to elect people of honesty and integrity, people of compassion and common sense, to positions of responsibility in every federal, state and local race on November 6th. We are out of time, Gentle Readers. We cannot afford to wait until ‘They’ give us ‘better candidates.’ The planet is burning, a new dark age is already here, and we don’t have the luxury of messing around.

Indivisible.org, July 2018

If we want to win, we can’t use voting to broadcast to the world our personal moral excellence. Save that for Facebook. Voting in a two-party system is a pragmatic choice between two competing inevitabilities. Sure, there are other parties, but in our system they rarely stand a chance of winning. And often, they cause the best candidates to lose. The Green Party candidacy of Ralph Nader cost Al Gore the presidency in 2000, based on the very reasonable assumption that many of Nader’s votes would have gone to Gore if Nader hadn’t run.

It’s easy to imagine that people who found Gore too stiff or smug felt righteous and self-satisfied by voting for Nader, but the effect of their vote was to hand the presidency to George Bush.

When voters ignore the pragmatic consequences, our side loses, and the outcome can be catastrophic. Gore may have been too neo-liberal, or too establishment, or too whatever, but it’s safe to say we would not have gone to war in Iraq under a Gore presidency. Gore might have paid more attention to reports about al-Queda than Bush, who ignored them. Gore certainly would have done much more to mitigate climate change than Bush ever did. This isn’t about re-litigating the 2000 election, it’s about demonstrating the dire consequences of letting the perfect be the enemy of the good.

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HARD TRUTH

by Sally Herrin

— Out of Time —

*Tell me brave captain
why are the wicked so strong?
How do the angels get to sleep
when the devil leaves the porchlight on?*

This observation by Tom Waits illustrates the first and most critical hard truth, the one fact we can never ever ever ever ever ignore. The wicked are so strong because they enjoy a moral advantage over the rest of us.

24/7, year in and year out, the wicked enjoy far greater moral latitude, because so long as they come out on top, the wicked just

don't care what harm they do.

Apparently driven by an insatiable hunger for power and resources, the wealthiest One Percent of earth's people controls a greater percent of all earth's resources than at any time in the history of the planet. Many voices have long warned of the consequences of unfettered winner-take-all capitalism, wherein the bottom line is always the highest priority, while the best interests of the bottom Ninety Percent, not to mention the best interests of our ecosystem, always come last.

I don't know many billionaires up close

and personal, nor the Nine Percent who carry the One Percent's water—the legal, technical, financial and political elite class which helps keep the One Percent in power in return for cars and vacations and other crumbs from the tables of their betters. I won't even speculate as to if, or how, these people justify themselves to the god of their understanding or even to themselves, or whether they understand the consequences for the mass of people today and for the future.

conclusion on page 15