



Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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NFP's Golden Anniversary

50 Years of Peacemaking & Justice-seeking

Nebraskans for Peace, the nation's oldest **statewide** Peace & Justice organization, is celebrating its 50th anniversary of advocacy this year. Over the coming months, under the theme, "Protecting the Earth, Our Home", NFP will be marking this historic milestone while spotlighting the grave threats that still confront us.

Incorporated in 1970 in opposition to the Vietnam War, Nebraskans for Peace was formed from the merger of two local anti-war groups: the central Nebraska-based "Rural Nebraskans for Peace" and the Lincoln student and community-based organization "Nebraskans for Peace in Vietnam". "It's not every day that a volunteer-based, social justice group marks a golden anniversary," current NFP President Ron Todd-Meyer stated. "It's a tribute to the convictions of the three generations

of Nebraskans whose untiring commitment to a more peaceful and just world made this achievement possible," Todd-Meyer, who is a Vietnam War veteran and retired family farmer, added.

Over its half-century of existence, the organization has ardently opposed the U.S. governments' military interventions in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iran, Panama and Iraq that, in each instance, were based on misleading claims of threats to America's national security. Paul Olson, a UNL emeritus professor and founding member of the organization, said, "All of those wars resulted in huge losses of life and resources—and to no worthy end. In every case, our governmental leaders, both Democratic and Republican, rushed to war without exhausting the possibilities of diplomacy."

The group has also been unremitting in its opposition to the U.S. military's strategic reliance on nuclear weapons—the national command center for which is located at Offutt AFB in Bellevue. With the existential threat nuclear weapons pose, their continued possession, the group flatly insists, is too risky. Beyond the massive death from an intentional nuclear conflict, there's the danger of 'accidental launch' due to human error or technical malfunction, and also the aftermath of global famine caused by the dust and debris of nuclear blasts blocking out the sun and disrupting food production. All that has saved us from nuclear holocaust so far, the organization avers, is luck.

NFP has also continually called out the wasteful, bloated and unaudited budget of the Department of Defense. In the organization's view, these vital resources would contribute more to our national security if used for education, health care and meeting the basic needs of all life on the planet.

Following the credo that "There is no Peace without Justice", the organization has from the outset been an outspoken advocate for human and civil rights. In all of its decades of activism, however, Nebraskans for Peace has never been prouder than to have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with Winnebago Tribe member Frank LaMere in the 18-year-long campaign to shut down the beer stores in Whiteclay.

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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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But so many other ongoing injustices in our state, the group emphasizes—racial discrimination, sex and gender bias, economic inequality—still continue. In fact, under the current administration, 'hate' has tragically experienced a resurgence. The "Make America Great Again" slogan itself, the Peace & Justice organization notes, is a coded appeal to a 1950s past that was anything but 'great' for women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans and LGBTQIA citizens. "Discrimination is atrocious, whatever the form," Omaha African American activist and NFP State Board member A'Jamal Byndon stated. "Justice demands that we move forward in the future—not backslide into the shameful oppression of the past."

Since Nebraskans for Peace was founded in 1970, the world has been confronted with another existential threat every bit as horrific as nuclear holocaust. As former Vice President Al Gore noted in accepting the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, "We have been waging war on the planet," with the very ecosystem we need to survive now in peril. Marilyn McNabb, who served as NFP's State Coordinator from 1973-

"There is no greater 'peace issue' than the climate crisis. Climate disruption now threatens every living thing on the face of the earth: from the soil, to the plants, to the animals—which includes us as humans."

— Marilyn McNabb, NFP State Coordinator 1973-74

74, stressed that, "There is no greater 'peace issue' than the climate crisis. Climate disruption now threatens every living thing on the face of the earth: from the soil, to the plants, to the animals—which includes us as humans." Preventing runaway climate disruption is integral to our ability to continue growing food, Todd-Meyer, the retired family farmer and NFP president stated: "Food is the foundation of human society... And without sufficient food, society descends into chaos."

Humanity faces almost overwhelming challenges in the immediate years ahead, without much time to deal with them, Todd-Meyer continued. The United Nations Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change warns that the entire world only has until 2030 to cut global carbon emissions in half. "Drastic changes will be demanded of us, requiring Nebraskans to dramatically cut our personal consumption," he said. "But on the occasion of Nebraskans for Peace's 50th anniversary, we are pledged to help to our neighbors and fellow citizens prepare for this new reality by building community and self-reliance, strengthening our democratic institutions, localizing our food supply and creating a sharing economy. There has never been a better or more essential time for us all to be 'Nebraskans for Peace'."

The development of these three themes has been in the hands of NFP state coordinator Tim Rinne, who has served the organization for 27 years, and his long-term staff colleagues Susan Alleman, Mark Welsch and Brittany Cooper—all of whom have together served a combined 43 years. NFP's longevity and authority is unquestionably due in part to their generous personal commitment.

What the Future Holds for NFP at 50 amid COVID-19 and Climate Change

Locked down under a global pandemic was never how we envisioned commemorating Nebraskans for Peace's 'Golden Anniversary'. We'd been planning a big public celebration for almost a year. But in a way, the crisis conditions are fitting, as Nebraskans for Peace was born under crisis.

Fifty years ago, in the midst of what seemed to be an interminable military conflict, the U.S. government was drafting young men to fight a war half the world away... courting a superpower showdown with a nuclear-armed Soviet Union... and devastating the lives and homes of both Vietnamese and Americans alike. In this crisis-charged environment Nebraskans for Peace was born... (And with it our unending mission as peacemakers in a violence-plagued world.)

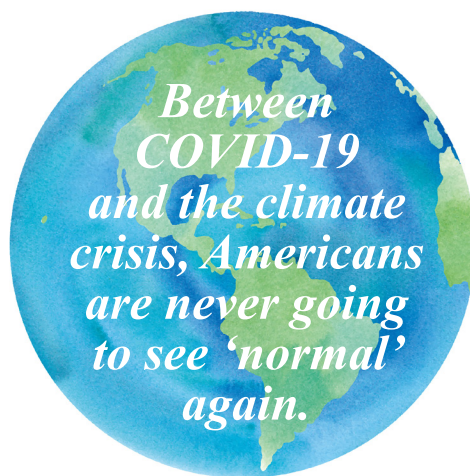
With the coronavirus, though, Nebraskans for Peace is facing a new kind of conflict. Till now, most of the crises we as a peace organization have confronted (the War in Vietnam, the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, the War on Terror) have been **political** and **ideological** in nature (relating to human-devised systems of communism, imperialism and terrorism).

One after another, the political and military crises of the past 50 years have called for the peace movement to stand up and oppose a wrong-headed policy... And after half a century of uninterrupted activism, we know how to 'speak truth to power'. We've got that drill down pat.

But the adversary we now find ourselves battling with COVID-19 is not ideological but **biological**—a conflict in which we find ourselves fighting Nature itself. There's no 'policy' or 'person' we can direct our energy towards to resist or seek to change. Everyone is **against** the coronavirus. (Even Donald Trump.)

Instead, an existential crisis like this pandemic calls for Peace & Justice organizations such as ours to demonstrate NOT what we're against, but *what we're for*... And this is where our hard-earned, hands-on experience in educating and organizing (not to mention our half-century-long **reputation** as peacemakers and truth-speakers) has prepared NFP to play a crucial leadership role.

COVID-19 is requiring each of us to radically adjust our lifestyles: from practicing social distancing and sheltering in place, to washing our hands and not touching our faces. In the process, our economy has largely screeched to a halt... our mobility options have drastically narrowed... and we're eating at home as never before. Without ever consciously meaning to do so, Americans are practicing the principles of "Voluntary Simplicity"—of 'Living Simply so Others can Simply Live'.



Sheltering in place with its attendant restrictions on travel, shopping, dining and entertainment are markedly similar to the lifestyle changes and reductions in personal consumption called for by climate scientists. The climate crisis has been temporarily put on the back burner as our public officials rush to contain the coronavirus pandemic. But if we are to cut global carbon emissions in half by 2030 to prevent catastrophic climate disruption (*which means cutting our personal consumption IN HALF by 2030*), we will have to permanently adopt lifestyles like the ones we're now living.

Given the consumption levels middle-class Americans have become accustomed to (and have come to take for granted as 'necessary'), austerity and sacrifice is the last thing we want to hear about. We all want to get back to 'normal'. But between COVID-19 and the climate crisis, Americans are never going to see 'normal' again.

Travel restrictions, consumption reductions and food and medical shortages will become regular facts of life.

Believe us, we feel your pain. As middle-class Americans ourselves who have enjoyed the highest standard of living in the history of the world, we understand how personally repellant this whole prospect of austerity and sacrifice is.

But as peace activists committed to justice for everyone, we need to remember that most people in the world HAVE NEVER HAD what we Americans regard as 'normal'.

Most of the world's population has:

- Never eaten anywhere near as much meat as we do...
- Never eaten foods that are out of season or that are not locally available...
- Never flown on a plane...
- Never owned a car...
- Never had our medical options...
- Never had the luxury of worrying about fashion...
- Never had our entertainment choices... and
- Never had our life expectancy.

For us as Americans, this is an entirely new way of living and being we're talking about... Without question, we're all going to be in for a rough time adjusting to these changed circumstances.

And things are looking to get even rougher. Beyond the perils posed by the coronavirus, climate scientists are now warning that we will start seeing "ecosystem collapse" within this coming decade. The COVID-19 restrictions are only a foretaste—a 'dress rehearsal' if you will—for the even greater crises to come.

But this is where our stance and expertise as a Peace & Justice organization comes into play. NFP's leadership in helping our neighbors and communities deal with the challenges and the upheaval we'll be facing will be vital. As peacemakers, we better than anyone are positioned to help

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JOIN NFP TODAY!

Become a Member of the Oldest Statewide Peace & Justice Organization in the United States

Yes, here's my membership to Nebraskans for Peace at the special introductory rate of \$25

Check (payable to 'Nebraskans for Peace') Credit Card (Mastercard / VISA)

Card: _____ Exp. ____ / ____ CVV: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

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Legislative District # (or name of Senator): _____

How did you hear about NFP? _____

Or to become a member online, visit:
nebraskansforpeace.org and click on "Donate."

Membership payments to NFP are NOT tax-deductible due to our political activity. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to the Nebraska Peace Foundation for our educational work.

Mail this form to: **Nebraskans for Peace**
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make the necessary transition as smooth as possible during the trying times ahead. As people of peace, we can not only 'model' good citizenship (providing examples of fair-minded and law-abiding behavior), but we can be a consistent advocate for those most in need to ensure that everyone is cared for and nobody is left behind.

As our social focus in this lockdown, of necessity, shifts to the **local** level—to our neighborhoods and our communities—we will have an opportunity to put our peacemaking principles into practice at the grassroots. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used to speak at length of the goal of creating the "Beloved Community":

The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. The type of love that I stress here is agape which is understanding good-will for all people. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return... This is the love that may well be the salvation of our civilization.

The coronavirus pandemic has upended our world. When we welcomed in the new decade January 1st, nobody ever

imagined that in three months we'd be living under national lockdown.

But while we're 'sheltering in place', this is an opportunity to voluntarily embrace Gandhi's practice of "Simple Living" and to begin building Dr. King's "Beloved Community" right where we're at.

When the pandemic does finally abate, Nebraskans for Peace will once again resume its active involvement in state and national politics. We'll get strenuously back to work on nuclear abolition and cutting military spending, climate change and food security, economic and social justice, and self-determination for the people of Palestine.

In the meantime, we can begin changing our world—starting with simplifying our own lifestyles:

Take the 'No Fly' Pledge and scrap your vacation travel... Reduce your private vehicle transportation (walk or bike wherever you can)... Pledge to eat less meat and dairy... Cook at home, eating a mostly plant-based diet... Convert inedible lawn into garden and grow some of your own food (and if you don't have garden space, plant in containers or windowsills)... Buy locally grown food whenever you can... Buy only what you need and stop using 'shopping'

as recreation... Cut your consumption every way possible... And start seeing your neighborhood as your 'world'—as YOUR "Beloved Community".

And once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, get involved in your neighborhood and start revitalizing your local democratic institutions. Reach out to your local government officials and urge them to begin preparing for climate disruption. We need to be planning now for food and water shortages, weather disasters, future pandemics and emergency shelter for those in need. We need to get ready now, because when bad things happen, the effects are always felt locally.

More than at any other time in our storied 50-year-long history, our state and its communities are going to be needing the leadership that an organization like Nebraskans for Peace can best provide. From this point forward, we're going to be called upon in ways we never imagined... And for all our sakes, we need to make sure we're ready and able to respond.

The insights in the following articles—"What Does a 'Simple Living' Lifestyle Look Like?" and "What Would a 'Beloved Community' Look Like"—can help us all prepare...

— Ron Todd-Meyer & Tim Rinne

What Does a...

'Simple Living'

... Lifestyle Look Like?

If you're fortunate enough to be 'middle class', you've been able to hop in the car whenever you want, eat whatever you're hungry for, go shopping, spend money on recreation, and maybe even fly somewhere for a holiday.

Consumption has become such an enthroned part of our American way of life we've equated it with 'freedom'. So long as we've got the money to pay for it, we're free to move around at will, eat out, shop till we drop, trade up for a nicer car, a nicer home (in a 'nicer' neighborhood), and then 'throw away' what's 'old' or out of fashion. This consumer drive is so ingrained in our psyches, it's now reflex. We don't give it—or its impact on the ecosystem—a second thought.

But with the coronavirus and the climate crisis, we have no choice but to start rethinking the way we live.

By limiting our mobility, sheltering at home and social distancing have not only reduced transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic—they've simultaneously reduced our ability to go out and consume. The lockdown on the global economy has had a further dampening effect on our consumer spending, with supply shortages and price increases on everything from toiletries to groceries (particularly meat).

Like our "Greatest Generation" great-grandparents during the Depression and World War II, middle-class Americans now find themselves having to make do with a lower level of consumption—concentrating on the bare necessities needed to live, and not a lot more. Instead of being a temporary state of affairs, however, this retrenchment is the wave of the future. The prevailing threat of pandemic and climate disruption ensures that 'doing with less' will be the 'new normal' from now on... And 'Living Simply' our only viable lifestyle option.



And, as we're daily discovering, cutting our consumption won't kill us. Half of the world already lives on less than half of what we do, so we know it can be done. But making these necessary cuts—both for own health and the planet's—will require a permanent cultural shift in our perspectives and attitudes.

At its heart, 'Simple Living' is about seeing ourselves as just 'plain members and citizens' of the earth's community of life: coequal with the soils, waters, plants and animals, with no special rights or entitlements. The earth, it turns out, does not 'belong' to us humans. We are not the natural world's 'conquerors'. In fact, it's we humans who belong to the earth. And by following Mohandas Gandhi's prescription for 'living simply'—taking no more than we need—we make it possible for others in the vast community of life to 'simply live'.

For all of us who've enjoyed a middle-class standard of living, this is

going to unquestionably require a top-to-bottom re-tooling of how we go about our daily lives: including the acquirement of discarded skills from great-grandma's and great-grandpa's day. Here then are some steps to living a simpler life that are more in keeping with what our sorely overtaxed and overwrought ecosystem can realistically accommodate:

Reduce your private vehicle transportation (walk or bike wherever you can)... Under the 'sheltering in place' guidelines, we're already supposed to be staying put as much as possible. But to conserve resources as well as reduce our carbon footprint, when you must use a car, try to bundle as many of your errands as you can into one trip. And then come right back home to your neighborhood where you can walk and bike to get around.

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'Simple Living', conclusion

Pledge to eat less meat and dairy...

We're seeing meat shortages all across the country—from supply-chain breakdowns to packing plant closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks. If ever there was a time to curtail the meat (and dairy) in our diets, this is it.

Cook at home, eating a mostly plant-based diet... We're so programmed to build a meal around meat and/or dairy that cooking vegetarian or vegan can take some getting used to. But it's worth it—particularly if you're cooking with

Cutting our consumption won't kill us. Half of the world already lives on less than half of what we do, so we know it can be done.

ingredients you grew yourself. Dry beans and peas; potatoes; sweet potatoes; grains like corn, millet, sorghum and oats; milled whole grain flours and meals for baking; mushrooms; seeds and nuts; and the utter cornucopia of vegetables and fruits out there all make for the possibility of eating well, eating local and eating low on the food chain. What better time to get into the kitchen and start exploring than when we're stuck at home sheltering in place? The internet has tons of vegetarian and vegan recipes you can try out.

Convert inedible lawn into garden and grow some of your own food (and if you don't have garden space, plant in containers or windowsills)... In the built urban environment, we don't have much land available for food-growing, but what we do have, we invariably squander on lawn—even though we as humans

can't eat grass and in the city we can't keep the animals (cows, sheep, goats) that do. This dangerously wrong-headed mindset is part and parcel of the city dweller attitude that our sole role in the food system is to consume, to be 'eaters'... and somebody else, somewhere, somehow will grow it for us. If nothing else, the COVID-19 crisis is showing us who those nameless, faceless food workers are, how risky their work is, and how vulnerable our global food system is to shortages and scarcity. To keep stuffing our mouths, urban eaters are going to need to start pulling their weight in the food system—growing the perishable food crops (the lettuce, spinach, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini) that the city can grow better than anyone else, because what we'll harvest will be fresher and therefore more nutritious.

Buy locally grown food whenever you can... If we want a more secure local food supply, then, with our dollars, we're going to have support local producers who are out there this very minute in the sun and heat trying to grow it. Making 'low price' the ONLY criterion for what we buy is going to torpedo any effort to create a vibrant local food system. Farmers grow for markets, and without markets they don't farm. "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" whenever you can. It's a down payment on always having something for dinner.

Buy only what you need and stop using 'shopping' as recreation... With our fixation on consumerism, shopping has been turned into a recreational pastime. "Wanna go shopping? We can just browse and window shop and see if we see anything we like." But with the inevitable contraction in the economy, that frivolous behavior will be abating in favor of satisfying material needs. Fashion, new car models, the latest smart phone devices will be the first to go, as they are inessential, are ethically unjustifiable given the damage their production inflicts on the ecosystem, and, in any event, will be beyond most people's financial reach. If we don't need it to

live, it's superfluous consumption and just making our environmental situation worse.

Take the 'No Fly Pledge' and scrap your vacation travel... Hardly anybody's flying right now, but rest assured there will be a big push to revive the airline industry. As flying is the single-worse thing you can do for your carbon

By following Mohandas Gandhi's prescription for 'living simply'—taking no more than we need—we make it possible for others in the vast community of life to 'simply live'.

footprint and fewer than 1 out of 5 people on earth has ever even been on a plane, we need to give up the notion once and for all that air travel fits anywhere in the practice of Simple Living.

Change your recreational habits... So we shouldn't travel, shouldn't shop for recreation, shouldn't eat (much) meat and dairy, shouldn't waste energy, water or food? Is there anything we can do to make life worth living? Sure there is. We can garden, cook tasty food, read books, write, make music, make art, take walks, exercise and play games, socialize with friends, fall in love, raise children, take care of aging loved ones... We honestly don't need superfluous consumption to be happy, when, after all, the best things in life are free.

AND FINALLY, Start seeing your neighborhood as your 'world' — as YOUR "Beloved Community".

(See the accompanying article...)

What Would a...

'Beloved Community'

... Look Like?

When Martin Luther King, Jr. first began popularizing the concept of the “Beloved Community” in the mid-1950s, he was envisioning a world where people of all colors, ethnicities and creeds could—through the global practice of nonviolence—find the means to live with mutual respect and cooperate with one another. Today, in our toxically divided nation and planet, that goal is more worthy than ever.

In an age of pandemics and growing climate disruption, however, creating that ‘Beloved Community’ right in our own neighborhoods (to provide some degree of safe harbor) will be a material necessity. Unable to get out and about like we used to, obliged to stay put where we are, we’re going to have start seeing our neighborhoods—where we eat, sleep, work, love and live—as our world. Our immediate neighbors will be our social network and lifeline... And we, in turn, will be theirs.

But first, we’ll have to get to know them.

Despite the global revolution in ‘communication’ and ‘inter-connectivity’, technology hasn’t really helped us get to know the people on our block. Instead—like privacy fences around our backyard patios—flat screen TVs, streaming videos and hand-held devices have actually served to wall us off from our next-door neighbors. Information technology can be enormously beneficial and unquestionably has its place in our lives. But if we hope to build our own local Beloved Community that can become an in-the-flesh source for mutual aid, cooperation and neighborhood security, we’re going

to have to put down our devices, go ‘outside’ and meet the people we live among.

‘Rootedness’ is the foundation of community. We have to first commit to a



place, put down roots and call it ‘home’ to be able to start building any kind of community bond with the people residing around us. And the tool we found in our city block in Lincoln that was able to open even the most tightly shut door was ‘food’. (Or, more specifically, gardening.)

We may not know our neighbors’ names... May have never even spoken to any of them... But one thing we can be sure that we all share an interest in is eating. The vast majority of us don’t have the first clue about our food system, have no idea where all that food comes from, and little inclination to find out. But we all like to eat—morning, noon and night. Ain’t one of us that likes to miss meals.

As a country, though, our food IQ is dangerously low. We pay such little attention to our food system we don’t even know what we don’t know.

Before we began tearing up our lawns and converting our block into ‘edible landscapes’ ten years ago, we were as blissfully ignorant as everyone else. There was only 1 garden in the entire block: my wife Kay’s and mine—just an 8’x12’ plot where I annually grew what my organic gardener father called “the spindliest-looking tomato plants” he’d ever seen. From the moment I actually started spading up our lawn in 2009, though, I began meeting our neighbors. Curiosity and incredulity can explain some of what finally brought us together to speak. (They’d never seen anyone intentionally dig up their grass before and wanted to know what exactly did I think I was doing?)

But mainly, what got us talking was that I was outside, working in our garden, and available to speak to when they walked by. It was that accessibility—and that, even though people didn’t garden

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What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

The Earth Is in the ER: Here's Another Curve That Needs Bending

Thanks to the coronavirus plague, anyone who has been paying attention knows about “the curve” that has to bend down before we can resume life something like what we had heretofore considered normal. Now may be a good time to consider another curve—the carbon dioxide level since 1880, which has not bent down at all since the burning of

skies instead of the usual dung-brown haze. Wonders such as this occur when almost no one is driving cars, burning farm debris, or working in factories that emit coal-powered exhaust.

Matthew Fleischer, a senior editor in the *Los Angeles Times* Opinion section,

has gone up since 1880.

Doing the math, one discovers that these emissions will have to fall 7 to 8 percent per year for several decades to get us back to 300 to 350 ppm required to bend the curve down to a survivable level. No one wants to subject anyone to 50 years



fossil fuels became commonplace in the 19th century. Its ascent does not kill us, not instantly. There are no screaming sirens in the otherwise empty streets carrying any of us off to over-crowded emergency rooms to suffocate in agony. All the same, the rising carbon dioxide curve already has altered how we live our lives, and its effects will magnify in coming years.

An irony of the present pandemic is that our staying at home and the shuttering of much of our economy may help to bend the greenhouse-gas curve for a little while. It has also brought air pollution down. Reports from New Delhi, the world capital of dirty air, describe occasionally crystal clear

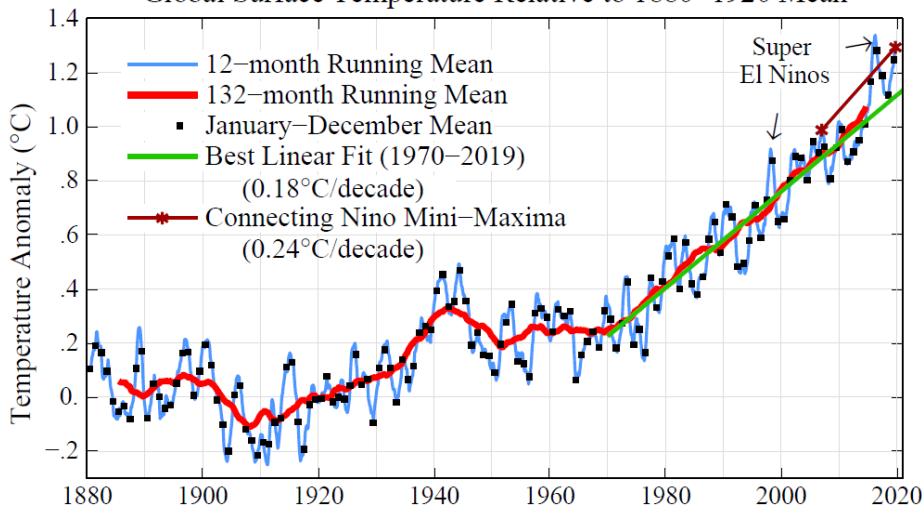
points out that putting the world economy on life support isn't going to even begin to solve the climate crisis. The knock-on effects of the economic disaster prompted by world governments' reactions to the coronavirus pandemic is ironic, yes, but not a solution, hardly.

Reuters published an account in April asserting that world carbon dioxide production might fall 5 percent this year because of the economy's pandemic lockdowns—the most since 1946. This figure does little except indicate just how much, and how consistently, greenhouse-gas production

of pandemics to escape the climate apocalypse—not to mention a future without sports events, concerts, or trips to the zoo and shopping malls. “The worst pandemic in a century won't solve climate change. We have to do that for ourselves,” wrote Fleischer.

The carbon-dioxide curve has been rising ever since the gas has been measured in the atmosphere about 1880, almost without interruption (using decade-long averages). The concentration of CO₂ in the air has risen from about 200 parts per million in

Global Surface Temperature Relative to 1880–1920 Mean



The Question of Our Time

A Review of Julian Cribb's

FOOD OR WAR

by Ron Todd-Meyer

As a Vietnam War veteran, life-long farmer and current president of Nebraskans for Peace, there was no way I could resist reading Julian Cribb's recently published book *Food or War* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). An acclaimed Australian journalist and science writer, Cribb has also written *The Coming Famine* (2010), *Poisoned Planet* (2014) and *Surviving the 21st Century* (2017)...

Cribb provides an excellently researched history of the connection between food and war all the way back to the origins of agriculture 5,000-7,000 years ago. The book explains "how humanity has used food as a tool and a consequence of conflict and migration." In the preface of the book, he states that scholars and media tend to focus on political, religious or nationalistic differences, but the underlying fear and hatred that causes conflict is the lack of food, land and water.

Most empires of history originated in the fertile valleys of rivers. The Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Indus, Ganges, Yangtze and Yellow, Mekong, Rhine, Danube and Tiber river systems all provided sources of food for the empires and dynasties that arose over the millennia of human civilizations. Abundant food provided for a healthy and growing population. As each of these civilizations flourished, the need to expand their areas created the need for armies to protect what was already provided for the population and the need to occupy more land to feed a growing empire. Displacing or enslaving the local population who lived in the conquered area was the most common strategy. Cribb states that in the history of war, more humans actually die of hunger, starvation and the disease caused by an inadequate diet than from death on the battlefield.

Today, with a rapidly growing population that is exceeding the sustainable capacity of the natural world, there are now a whole host of conditions that put life in peril that will cause more conflict and war. A warming of the climate because of our reliance on the burning of fossil fuels—and much of that a consequence of the way food is

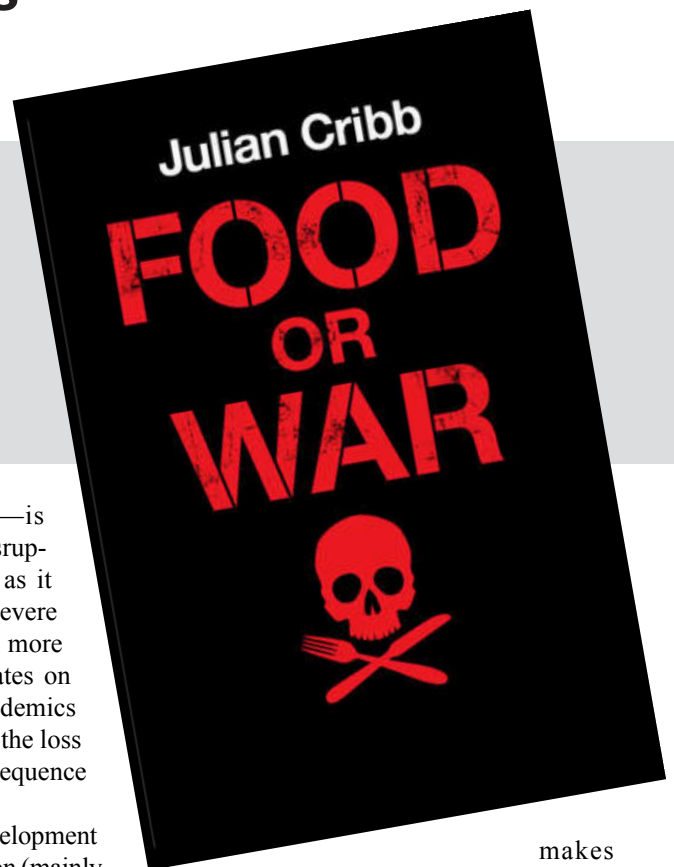
produced and distributed—is the chief threat. Climate disruption is a 'threat multiplier' as it creates more droughts and severe storms causing flooding and more displacement. Cribb elaborates on the increasing threat of pandemics due to a warming planet and the loss of biodiversity, another consequence of industrial agriculture.

Another threat is the development of weapons of mass destruction (mainly the proliferation of a nuclear arsenal by more than a dozen nations), which if ever used will plunge the planet into a 'nuclear autumn', diminishing the ability to grow food for decades.

A chapter of the book is devoted to the degradation of soil and water that often drives displaced people to mega cities that then must rely on importing food in order to feed the cities' populations. The crowding of people into cities with scarce resources also creates more violence and crime. The industrial model of much of the world's agriculture that claims to be 'feeding the world' is also consuming enormous amounts of fresh water while also contaminating it with poisons, and exacerbating soil erosion, creating dead zones in the world's seas.

For most of the book a rather bleak picture is painted for the future, but Cribb does offer some remedies that could avert some of the consequences of the human tendency to consume and conquer other fellow creatures and nature itself.

Among the recommendations he



makes are to reallocate 20 percent of world military spending and invest those resources into sustainable food development. Cribb describes this as true 'defense spending' in that it reduces tensions and alleviates the movement of refugees. He advocates for regenerative practices in agriculture that would include more urban agriculture. Cities would need to recycle their water and nutrients instead of wasting and polluting natural resources. Another change that needs to occur is what he describes as 'rewilding' half the planet to restore biodiversity and sequester more carbon. He also advocates putting women in charge of business, government, religion and society.

From personal experience I found the book confirmed many of my suspicions that have evolved after 50 years of reflection as a farmer and veteran. I remember the rice farmers of Vietnam as they labored to feed their families and how the U.S. occupation disrupted and displaced many of them. In

conclusion on page 11

'Beloved Community', conclusion

themselves (and by their own admission really didn't even cook), they were interested in food. Whether we garden or not, whether we cook or just 'heat' in a microwave, everybody's interested in food. It's our common human denominator.

The following year, when we had our first strawberry harvest, Kay and I made a

The tool we found in our city block in Lincoln that was able to open even the most tightly shut door was 'food'. (Or, more specifically, gardening.)

point of offering a quart of home-grown, fresh-picked strawberries to every household on the block. Those berries put us on a first-name basis with our neighbors. And the year after that (along with passing out another quart), we began issuing invitations to our neighbors to have their own garden plot. Ten years later, in a block with no vacant lots, where there'd once been no garden but my own miserable little tomato patch, we've now got 20 households annually tending their own gardens and four-fifths of an acre (the equivalent of 80 yards of a football field) under cultivation. We're not just growing food. We're growing community.

We call our block the "Hawley Hamlet"—after the Hawley Historic District where we live. Everyone who gardens with us is a "Hamleteer". And we're doing all this while we're practicing social distancing (which isn't all that difficult as gardening is a largely solitary process).

We're not a "Beloved Community" yet. We've got a long ways to go. But many of our neighbors do now greet

each other by name, swap stories or seek advice and, like an unofficial "Neighborhood Watch", keep an eye on each other's homes and properties... Because, well, that's what neighbors do: they watch out for one another. And now that we know each other and have got a network, we're on the lookout for new ways to cooperate and keep growing.

After having been at this for a decade, we've converted almost all the lawn in the Hamlet that we can to garden. Agriculturally, we're reaching the limits of what we can do. But having watched what we've been doing the past ten years, neighbors in the block across the street are now starting to dig up their lawns and turn them into edible landscapes.

We're delighted to think our efforts at 'modeling' a better use of our yards is catching on. With the threat that the coronavirus and the climate crisis pose to our global food system, though, it can't just be our neighborhood that's growing food. By rights, every block in the city should be practicing urban agriculture and growing some of their own vegetables and fruits.

So now, in addition to being gardeners, we're becoming citizen activists and carrying our message into the halls of Lincoln city government. We're working with the Mayor's Office and the City Council to launch a promotional campaign for home gardening, modeled on the "Victory Gardens" of the Second World War. Two of our City Council representatives—Bennie Shobe and Tammy Ward—have actually volunteered to become Hamleteers, gardening with us in the Hamlet even though they don't live there.

Without batting an eye, we are shamelessly currying political favor with our local elected officials to push the need for re-localizing our food supply. To bolster our local food security and start preparing for the drastically changed social, environmental and economic conditions we're going to be facing in the days and months ahead, we're going to need to reinvigorate our local governmental institutions... Because 'local government'

will become the most important government we'll have.

Pandemics and climate disruption are global perils. But their impact is felt locally. Our homes and neighborhoods are the frontlines for disasters of these sorts. This is where we get ill or injured, and where we're cared for and (if we're lucky) recover.

There's no way though we can do this singly, operating just on our own, walled off from those around us. If we're going to be able to weather the enormous challenges that lie ahead—the diseases and destructive weather events, the food and medical shortages—we're going to have to do it by partnering with our neighbors, working together in the

In a block with no vacant lots, where there'd once been one tiny tomato patch, we've now got 20 households annually tending their own gardens and the equivalent of 80 yards of a football field under cultivation.

"Beloved Community" where we make our homes.

It's not going to be easy. Humans can be incredibly complicated creatures to deal with. But as Dr. King said almost 65 years ago, the "overflowing love" upon which the Beloved Community is built—which is "understanding goodwill for all people... and seeks nothing in return"—"may well be the salvation of our civilization."

— Tim Rinne

What's HOT, conclusion

the 19th century to double that, and more, today. Temperature is a 'lagging indicator' by about 50 years on land and 150 in the oceans (because of thermal inertia). Even so, it has risen about 1.1 degree C. since 1880. The 'real' figure, factoring in thermal inertia, is probably 2 to 3 degrees C. for a CO2 ratio of 415 ppm. Past estimates from the Pliocene 2 to 3 million years ago indicate that air temperature will be about 4 to 6 degrees F. higher in 50 to 100 years. A few decades after that, sea levels may be 15 to 20 feet higher. Yet, we hear no sirens, and see no body counts on the TV news. Like coronavirus, climate change is a silent killer—until a fire, a flood, a hurricane, or a heat wave of unusual intensity comes to your neighborhood. At that point, a piece of the Earth is in the Emergency Room.

While the string of CO2 rises may be broken during the next year or two as an economic depression closes in because of the coronavirus and Trump-era misman-

agement, who wants to live like this? The enduring, long-term way to bend the CO2 curve downward is to reduce use of fossil fuels and to replace them with wind, solar, geothermal and conservation. You've heard all of this, however.

As Bill McKibben wrote in his *New Yorker* blog April 16: "Societies, too, come with underlying conditions, and the two that haunt our planet right now are inequality and ecological turmoil. They've both spiked in the past few decades, with baleful results that normally stay just below the surface, felt but not fully recognized. But as soon as something else goes wrong—a new microbe launches a pandemic, say—they become starkly evident."

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).

FOOD OR WAR, conclusion

the Mekong Delta, rice fields were sometimes burned to try to control and move the population to the cities. After returning from my tour of duty, I recall a Secretary of Agriculture stating that U.S. policy should use food as a weapon. Eventually my conscience, rooted in a religious tradition, compelled me to begin questioning the assumptions of the prevailing American mindset and culture.

The farm crisis of the 1980s again called into question the status quo. In 1985, I heard an address by the Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture in which she kept reciting portions of Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America*. Reading the book and taking a trip to Nicaragua in 1986 furthered my awakening. I began to see that not only was the U.S. warring against hungry people, but also that our agricultural system was warring against nature. An agricultural system based on fossil fuels for fertility and a

replacement for labor was poisoning our planet, destroying rural communities and eroding our connection to our neighbors in the entire natural world.

There is also a correlation with the industrial model of agriculture under which I farmed, and the logic and destruction of war. It is based on the illusion of an enemy that needs to be subdued and defeated. Industrial agriculture relies on poisons to kill any perceived pests or enemies. Seed and chemical giants and their protagonists propagandize farmers with accolades of how the purchasers of their products are feeding the world. They entice them with bribes of new pickup trucks to the largest producers that purchase the most of their arsenal of poisons and the seeds that are resistant to them.

I recommend that those who want to create a more peaceful and just world read what some have described as a 'scary, but necessary book': *Food or War* poses the question for our time.

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COVID-19's pushing us further into the digital age, and Nebraskans for Peace is changing to keep up...

*Leo Yankton
Oglala Lakota
Nebraskans for Peace Board of Directors*

In the movies of the past showing the 2020s, we have flying cars, cyborgs, giant robots and all sorts of advanced technology that were either portrayed as wonderful or ominous. The “Terminator” with Arnold Schwarzenegger showed a completely destroyed world by 2029 where an assassin cyborg comes back from the future to kill the leader of the resistance before he was even born. The “Blade Runner” with Harrison Ford was also about Artificial Intelligence ‘life-like’ robots. “Back to the Future Part 2” has Michael J. Fox going to the future of 2015 to discover flying cars. Most of these older movies that predict what the future would be like have been somewhat off from the advancement of technology in real time, but one I would like to mention but not recommend watching is “Idiocracy”.

“Idiocracy” is set almost 500 years in the future in the time of 2505. This is a horrible roguish comedy that I did not particularly appreciate, but it eerily reminds me of the era of Donald Trump. In the movie, the President of the world is an ignorant celebrity who governs a society of people that have been dumbed-down by the breeding practices of the human race. The premise is that people with lower IQs breed more, and more intelligent people breed less because of careers and awareness of overpopulation, only to cause the breeding out of intelligence by 2505. Spoiler alert, they use Gatorade to water the crops.

When we come back to the reality of our current situation, we see that the COVID-19 pandemic has now caused some ‘nonessential’ online activities and technologies to become very relevant to maintaining our connection to each



Leo Yankton showing solidarity with all who struggle for Peace & Justice.

other and society at large. It also feels like the pandemic is also giving governments, corporations and tech companies the opportunities to set up more systems of monitoring and control over the

There needs to be a balance between things that are natural and things that are artificial in a way that does not poison people, nature, and the planet.

mainstream population under the façade of being necessary to protect us from the COVID-19 pandemic... to protect us against ourselves essentially. One of the main attacks on our liberties will be on our right to privacy. They now have computer chips that tech companies can surgically install into the human body for financial transactions, but also can

be used for tracking purposes. If you are worried about being chipped and losing all of your independence and anonymity, I am sorry to say that most of your privacy has already been given away to the huge tech companies like Google, Facebook and whoever your cellphone provider is. They can track your movements, your social circles, your buying habits and much more.

The downside to these advancements in technologies is that the large corporations and many of the governments around the world are gradually eroding our choice for privacy and making it easier for groups in power to exploit us. The upside to these advancements in technologies is it gives us the opportunity to bypass the corporate-controlled media to both get and disseminate grassroots information and communications. The entire world has been using social media to help campaign and resist against the exploitation and abuse happening at the highest levels of government and power-hungry corporations. We at Nebraskans for Peace have been struggling for years

How Far Have We Traveled? Is it Integration or Separation? Desegregation, Inclusion, Diversity, Quotas, Mixing of the Races or Genocide of the Black Race?



by A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon

Are conditions for African Americans better today than in years past?

This question has taken on particular relevance as I've been following the media coverage and governmental response to the coronavirus—or COVID-19 as it is commonly called. Despite the fact that COVID-19 disproportionately affects people of color, largely because of the underlying conditions of poverty and inadequate health care, the overwhelming number of faces in key decision-making positions are white and wealthy. These elites are not 'diversity' experts equipped to speak for nonwhite groups. They cannot appreciate the social distancing challenges low-income people of color have to contend with to protect themselves against exposure. They cannot understand the fear and pain caused by higher rates of infection, sickness and death and the inability to pay for it all. After literally generations of civil rights activism, COVID-19 has stripped bare the institutional racism that still riddles American life.

The lives of the poor and people of color have never received due attention from the media or our government... Not during their lives, nor even after their deaths. What white people in this country don't comprehend is the accumulated damage that hundreds of years of non-stop prejudice and oppression have inflicted on populations of color. Those of us of African descent are from stock who were enslaved and forcibly brought to this continent, stripped of their identities, beaten, the women raped and the families split up. Upon emancipation, under Jim Crow laws, our ancestors were promptly

segregated, hounded and sometimes lynched. Finally, in the modern era, we have been subjected to a discrimination in education, employment, income and opportunity that continues up to this day. We carry this legacy in every fiber of our beings in every moment of lives. And even today, in 2020, half a century after the civil rights movement, still must deal with the omnipresent threat of being the next Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Atatiana Jefferson, Ahmaud Arbery. We're sick of it, we want it to end. But not for one second does it stop.

As a young boy, I recall my mother's concern about her children not going south. Moreover, she distinctly said that someone in our family was lynched many years ago in Mississippi. She did not supply the details, but it left such an impression on me as a child that for years I had no intention of visiting the South. Moreover, whenever I met African Americans or whites from southern states, I immediately watched their behaviors and listened carefully to their language for racism and the impact of those racist behaviors on African American, southern-raised 'apologists'. As a youth, I observed that the local governmental agencies and the school system always recruited blacks (or so-called "Negroes") from the South for critical positions. When I inquired about why this was done, I was told it was because they were in high concentration at black colleges and were equipped (trained) to work in Omaha.

This whole picture constitutes a litmus test of where we are at as African Americans. For some of us, our perspective will depend on how integrated we are into various public and private institutions. Fast forward to 2020. As someone who has a considerable background in

and knowledge of race and the historical factors affecting African Americans and people of color, it's become apparent that we are experiencing the worst of times. Not to say that other times were better—but the sad reality is that we are sitting in a frying pan and unaware that, like the proverbial frog, we are being cooked.

Many of us suffer from what I call 'Negro amnesia'—a condition in which the cognitive recognition of one's group and their particular history is impaired. When I examine black faces in high places, the condition is clearly noticeable. They have been brainwashed of their group identity and are actually helping impede the acquisition of civil and human rights for the mass of African Americans.

Some weeks ago, I came across an editorial whose headline inferred that the election of Barack Obama was largely symbolic and a waste of time. As someone who'd twice voted for President Obama, I found the viewpoint offensive if not insulting. Millions of African Americans like myself had voted for the first African American President and overwhelmingly supported him because of his commitment to integration, diversity and Affirmative Action for people of color. But as I actually read the article, I found the authors' arguments irrefutable. The editorial writers, Cornell West and Tavis Smiley, took Obama to task for his unwavering allegiance to Wall Street bankers, but lackadaisical efforts to end poverty and lift up African Americans.

This tension between whether government serves the 'haves' or the have-nots' didn't just arise with Obama. It has plagued America

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Education: Small Steps Towards a Bigger Change



Claire Kallhoff

2020 Platteview High School graduate Claire Kallhoff received a \$500 scholarship from Nebraskans for Peace Scholarship Fund for her top-rated 2020 essay from the Second Congressional District focused on NFP's Issue Priority of the "Environment, Food Security & Conflict Prevention". Claire is planning to attend Nebraska Wesleyan University, where she will study elementary education.

In order to move towards peaceful change in any form, the educating of others must take place. We can't expect people who don't know much about our harmful effects on the environment to desire to play a part in the restoration of it if they are never taught. Similarly, to blame someone for their actions without showing them the right way is futile. Showing someone the right way starts at an educational level and needs to be cultivated in every school and grade level nationwide.

To do this, a new chapter must be added to every science class available in schools. This added chapter would not simply be reading about what is going on in Mother Earth. Rather, the chapter would be focused on taking action. The chapter would be sectioned into three: earth, land, and sea. Students would examine

how they are affecting the earth, the land, and the sea. Each section would include a lesson on how humans are affecting the topic and a 'call to action' project. The call to action project would be the takeaway message students gain from the topic. There would be example projects to choose from or the student could come up with their own.

Within the earth section, students would investigate the Greenhouse Effect and how it relates to climate change. In a sense, they would be learning about how the earth is affected by humans. The students would be given a project to take action. Such a project could be lessening the amount of time spent in a car, whether it be driving or as a passenger. The next section would be land. Students would focus specifically on how it is used and misused. Farming, agriculture, and the way food comes to be on student's table would also be included. The call to action project could be planting a garden or hosting/visiting a farmers market. The last section, sea, would focus on human's role in the destruction of earth's water sources and garbage entering bodies of water. The project could be choosing to recycle or practicing using less one-time-use plastics. The new chapter would educate students and help them to have their own call to action in their community, school or within their home. Enabling students to learn about this material, will open their eyes and guide them to be more aware of the world that surrounds them. In turn, they will be peacefully showing the right way forward and towards a brighter and cleaner future.

The people would follow my implementation of the new chapter, by accepting it at local school board, state Board of Education of Nebraska, and the United States Board of Education. In order to have a new chapter added to the science curriculum, board members and school administration would have to allow this change. They would implement the approach by adding it to the science curriculum. Within the classroom, students would follow this procedure by utilizing the extra chapter added to their science class. They would participate in the call to action projects of the earth, land and sea. Ultimately, they are responding to the call to action directly from the environment itself.

Based on this approach, students would be opened up to a literal form of a world of opportunities. They can gain knowledge on how they play a role in the environment today and how they can

positively affect it for tomorrow. Instead of being blamed for being the next generation of those who have no regard for the environment, they can be leaders. Within this new leadership will be peace. Educating others is the most peaceful way to protest or make a change in any shape or form. Choosing to show others the right way, is more powerful than punishing the wrong way or choosing violence. Inspiring students through the new chapter will help plant a seed of change. This seed of change will take root and—when watered with learning—will blossom and grow.

The hurdles, per se, that present themselves are the school boards and leadership within schools not granting this new chapter to be added. Another difficulty is students' lack of interest. Different ages bring different interests or disinterest—some may be inspired and strive to make a change, while others may not. Keeping students engaged and passionate about the topics and wanting to make a change will take much dedication and creativity on the teacher's part. Consequently, some teachers may not be willing or feel comfortable implementing these topics into their classrooms. While these obstacles may seem like a mountain to climb, it is worth it because educating about the environment will preserve the mountains themselves continuing to exist.

I stand behind my approach with passion because I plan on studying elementary education in college and inspiring my students to be positive changes in the environment. I also know that in order to make any change, whether it be big or small, the steps leading up to it matter the most. If I could plant a seed or spark of change in my local board of education, I would be satisfied. That being said, I know that having the complete science curriculum changed nationwide may be far-fetched... though changing the curriculum in the state of Nebraska is possible with dedication, peace, and a heart to serve the environment.

We must educate students of all ages in order to better equip them for the future on how they can preserve the environment and the natural world. Education is a way to peacefully change the world. I believe if we educate students in the classrooms, they can take the knowledge outside of the classroom and into the world. Our society, through education, can promote change by choosing to take small steps towards a bigger change.

A Recollection of NFP's Early Days

by Rich Maciejewski
NFP State Board and Central Nebraska
Peaceworkers

In the mid-'60s, as I shuffled between college attendance in Denver and summers and vacation time back in Shelton, Nebraska, my parents often transported me. We generally stopped in Ogallala to visit mom's first cousin and/or stay overnight. I usually bunked with their son Bob during the span of his junior high and senior high school years. Bob and I drew close as he often shared with me his frustrations of growing up and current problems he encountered before we fell asleep. The Vietnam War was in full swing as he prepared to graduate from high school. During that visit, he shared with me his plans to enlist in the war. Bob was the only child his parents had and would not have been drafted. I was concerned about his enlisting because he was fully committed to doing his part for the love of his country, and worried that he might be inclined to be 'too much of a hero' in his combat approach. Nevertheless, he made the decision, and there was no changing his mind.

As I moved through my moral and theology courses in Denver, the "Just War" theory was still by and large the accepted norm of the day most denominations used to justify conflicts. Clergy were warned against preaching against or about the war effort by Bishops and congregations at their services, especially in conservative states like Nebraska. Even though protests were beginning to break out in some areas, I was still buying the "Just War" theory and not making much noise against the denomination's directives to refrain from any other opinion. Toward the end of my theology training I happened to be back in Shelton when George McGovern came to Grand Island to speak. I went. He moved me to think a bit differently.

At the end of my third year of Theol-

ogy, cousin Bob had graduated from high school in 1966 and had signed up as he'd planned to enlist in the military. There was no changing his mind. I just hoped for the best. After Bob finished his basic training, he came home for a few weeks before being assigned to Vietnam. He spent his last weekend home with me in Grand Island, and as much as I cared for and loved him, we sent him off to the war. My fears were not wrong. While serving as an assistant at Blessed Sacrament Parish in the fall of 1967, I got a call from Bob's mom that he had been shot in Vietnam and died. It was the



hardest funeral I've ever officiated. Being a sentimental person, I was a mess—but he'd told his mom that if something happened, that's what he wanted. Bob's death was a turning point for me, and I began speaking about the war effort in different terms, but not easily, as most people were still being patriotic and supportive of the war.

After serving in parishes for three years, I came back to Shelton to pursue a master's degree in guidance and counselling at UNK in Kearney in the early '70s. Since I had been home most summers, I was a familiar face in Shelton and began to be more vocal about the war and peace efforts. Not long after, local farmers Fred Schroeder and his wife Maxine had caused some uproar at their Methodist church in Shelton. Fred met me on the street one day and invited me to a meeting at his place the following Sunday afternoon that he thought I might appreciate. He said it would deal with opposition to the Vietnam war. I had been at coffee with Fred and some of the local farmers a few times.

He could remain silent until one of them made a really outrageous or false statement and Fred felt compelled to correct them. Before long it would just be Fred and I left at the table.

I had been looking for ways to express my opposition to the war, as there still weren't many protests going on in our area, so Fred's invitation sounded like a good idea. What transpired at that meeting Sunday was an amazing experience. I'm a very vocal person and not afraid to speak up, but I didn't say much. My jaw was open and on the floor. I was astounded to hear middle-aged farmers and their wives from the Shelton and Central City area saying the things they were saying. They wanted to do whatever they could to move people against the war and get us out of Vietnam. When someone in the group came up with an idea to influence people, another might quickly say they would pay for that.

Ideas flowed and things moved fast. Those individuals were part of the founding group first known as "Rural Nebraskans For Peace"—middle-aged Nebraska farmers! I left the meeting amazed and knew I had found a group I had been looking for to channel my energy. Some of those farmers had been conscientious objectors in World War II, and a few had hidden or harbored objectors from being drafted into the Vietnam War. That was my beginning with the organization that became Nebraskans For Peace, when the rural folks realized they needed a much larger exposure. That is still where I hang my hat when it comes to participation toward peace matters. I don't know if the founders envisioned all the issues their organization would eventually tackle, but they certainly gave me hope and energy in 'hitting the streets' and hounding legislators to create that "most perfect union". Rest well you wonderful, visionary farmers.

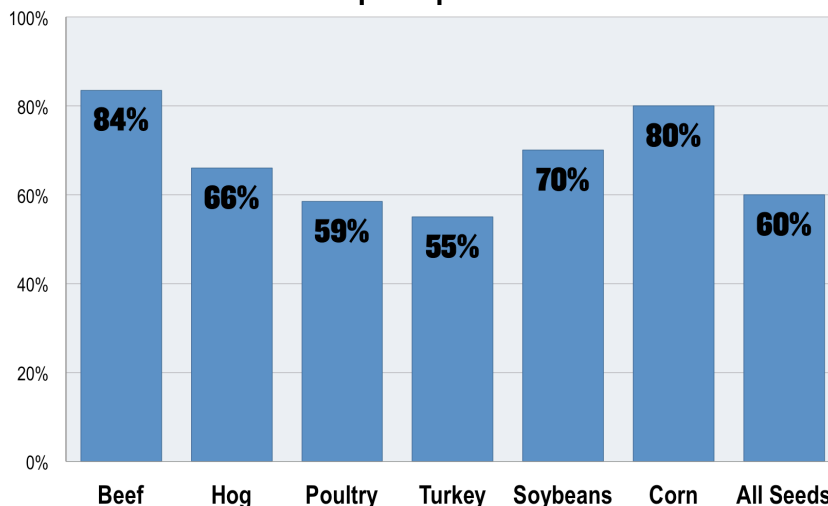
HARD TRUTH, continued

security and a strong rural economy both need farmer-owned reserves and on-farm storage for commodities reinstated. A truly competitive independent livestock industry requires a ban on packer feeding, and ‘country of origin labeling’—long the law, but never implemented—along with mandatory price reporting. Far better for taxpayers, consumers and producers if farmers and ranchers get their income from fair prices, as ‘subsidies’ really go to processors who buy on the cheap; rational targeting of any federal policy needs to favor small- and mid-size independent ag production.

Problem: Economists Case and Deaton find that tying health insurance to employment makes sense when worker salaries approach six figures. But the cost to employers of health care insurance for lower-paid workers can run as high as 60% of the total employment package for an individual. This fact is an enormous disincentive to American jobs and a literal killer, responsible for a decline of life expectancy for American men, early mortality from an array of so-called ‘deaths of despair’. You do the math. **Fix:** If we want good jobs for Americans, we have to decouple health insurance from jobs. Like the Nebraska Cornhusker defense often and unfairly maligned, the answer is a public option—Obamacare, Medicare for Any, call it what you like. We don’t have to kill off private

Concentration in Agriculture

Top 4 Companies’ Share



insurance plans that work well at the top end to give working people a plan that REALLY works. Pensions likewise need to be decoupled from employment. See <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralWelfare/>

Problem: Like the drunk who could not quit drinking ‘til all the booze in town was gone, so our society is unable to break its addiction to fossil fuel while reserves remain in the Earth, as it has seemed. **Fix:** As the 1% worked to starve government ‘til it could be drowned in the bathtub, so the fossil fuels sector must be starved of

incentives and bailouts and taxed to reflect so-called ‘externalities’. Externalities are in this case the REAL costs of coal and petroleum that don’t get accounted for at the pump or utility bill—costs to the planet and future humans and other critters that WILL be paid, just not by today’s 1%. A Marshall Plan for renewable energy must include vastly ramped up solar and wind generated electricity, and biofuels for trucking, farming and other heavy engine applications, including an immediate increase in the

conclusion on next page

Leo Yankton, conclusion

to stand up to these systems causing pain, destruction and waste on a global scale—which is the true ‘trickle down’ effect that damages our health physically, mentally, socially, economically and even spiritually. We at Nebraskans for Peace have decided that once again we must play the role of ‘David’ against the ‘Goliaths’ of government and big business by jumping into the race to master the modern world’s technologies. We have begun using Zoom technology for online meetings and will be taking a lot of our messages online in order to continue holding the powers-that-be accountable for their actions and keep grassroots mainstream populations

empowered. We are combining our Zoom meetings and Facebook lives to create a podcast platform to address issues that are STILL affecting us, even though they have been overshadowed by the current pandemic.

Nebraskans for Peace has not forgotten about Climate Change, wars based on profit, the displacement and abuse of vulnerable immigrant populations, food sovereignty and basic human and environmental rights. Not only have we not forgotten about these issues, we are still working diligently to combat the systems and people in power committing these atrocities with cruel intentions. We will need our circle of influence and peers to take the technological leap into 2020

with us as we work together to ensure the just and humane treatment of living beings and the planet. There needs to be a balance between things that are natural and things that are artificial in a way that does not poison people, nature and the Earth. Nebraskans for Peace will continue to pioneer, champion, and lead the resistance with the help of our members. The future is in our hands and the mainstream systems seem to be off track and oblivious to the need for balance and compassion. We must stay diligent and proactive in our efforts to keep them in check. We try to step out front as an organization, but are truly most effective as a collective mass of grassroots citizens in carrying our message forward.

How Far Have We Traveled?

since its founding. When large corporations fail, business and government leaders fall all over themselves to bail out Wall Street from the public till. These same people though will often turn right around and hypocritically balk at spending public funds to aid the poor and oppressed and correct an injustice. Every American president seems to be faced with the choice of supporting the interests of Big Business or the needs of rank-and-file Americans. You can generally do one or the other, but rarely both.

As for President Obama, if we were to empirically measure whether incomes, employment and homeownership for African Americans increased under his administration, the answer would be 'no'. Recent studies have indicated that due to the historic impact of slavery in the United States, Jim Crow laws, and countless acts of racial discrimination and injustice, it will take decades for African Americans to achieve economic parity with whites. This yawning economic divide has been compounded with the COVID-19 crisis, which could well push black people over the cliff of life.

Those being the stakes, here are three areas in which, by taking action, we would move the needle forward in this country for African Americans:

1. There must be reparation for the years of free labor that allowed too many whites to get rich off the backs of African Americans. Malcolm X was fond of saying that we worked from sunrise to sundown and never got a penny. As other academic experts at Georgetown University and elsewhere have documented, those trillions of dollars of ill-got gains can be traced to those slave owners and their descendants. We must begin to move that reparations conversation forward. It is far more than symbolic.
2. The University of Nebraska has established free tuition for families earning incomes under \$60,000 a year. That's a good beginning. However, what good is a stimulus check if it's all going to pay off the overpriced loan shark? More direct public assistance like that of the University needs to occur, at every level.
3. We should establish safe places where racial and economic integration is mandated. For example, in a community that is 33 percent people of color, there should not be one publicly funded 'whites-only space' or a single person going to bed without adequate nutrition. This is particularly insulting when we are paying for white folks who have never had any significant contact with people of color whatsoever. COVID-19 might just be a transformational opportunity for these whites to engage people of color on what they need for survival and thriving.

As long, though, as whites are allowed to live in their own segregated world away from people of color, we will never eliminate racism. The walls must come down... The gates to their privileged neighborhoods flung open... And the conversation begin in earnest. Anything else is just 'whistling Dixie' and, with pandemics like COVID-19, we will all pay for it, black and white alike.

HARD TRUTH, conclusion

Renewable Fuels Standard to thirty percent ethanol. Starve petrol and coal 'til rapine of the Earth no longer pays.

Problem: More than half a million Americans were homeless before the pandemic, a third of them families with children. This time next year, we could see those numbers double. **Fix:** Affordable housing can best be supported by investments in older neighborhoods, which are the MOST financially productive neighborhoods in the U.S.

Problem: The Supreme Court. **Fix:** Expand the Supreme Court. Let the Supremes elect their own Chief Justice.

Problem: Banking needs a major overhaul as do taxes and requirements for corporate transparency. **Fix:** Elizabeth Warren should be appointed to head the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The larger the loan, the higher the interest rate. The more paid in higher wages to workers (not executive salaries and perks) the lower your business or corporate taxes, and that's the only break you get.

Problem: A return to the status quo is unwise and probably impossible. **Fix:** Local

government needs to support smart investments over quick fixes. Waive home occupation restrictions. All neighborhoods are mixed-use—dump "exclusively residential" and allow need and opportunity to serve as catalysts for recovery. Legalize neighborhood essential services—small groceries and the like—to kickstart entrepreneurs. Pop up commercial spaces can seed the next generation of entrepreneurs and fill vacant commercial spaces—especially on pedestrian routes—which will inevitably be stuck in financial and legal limbo. Legalize housing adaptations like garage and duplex conversions.

Invest in walking and biking. A family that can shift from two vehicles to one saves thousands each year, money they can redirect to more urgent needs. Identify and address the most urgent barriers to walking and biking. Build no new parking.

Start growing food. Remove restrictions on gardening, greenhouses, chickens, and other small-scale food production. Allocate unused public land for community farming. "Thicken civic infrastructure" by working with non-profit organizations—

some secular and some religious—already serving the needs of people within the community. They are already the experts. "Use public resources to coordinate, connect, and promote these efforts," advises Strongtowns.org.

Prioritize maintenance over new capacity. Prioritize below-ground structure over above ground structure—many communities in this country use water and sewer lines that are 100 years old.

Finally (see Homelessness, above), prioritize "neighborhoods that are more than 75 years old. The firm Urban3 has modeled hundreds of cities across the country. In every one, the neighborhoods with the highest financial productivity are the ones that existed before World War II, even when they are occupied by the poorest people in the community. These are traditional neighborhoods but today they still have the greatest capacity to adapt to new realities. Investments in stabilizing these neighborhoods have the greatest potential to pay off." (Source: Strongtowns.org.)

HARD TRUTH

by Sally Herrin

Post-Pandemic 'Wish List' for Structural Change

My father, known today as Grandad, was a superb reader-aloud of comic strips. Like the character from Dickens, he “did the police in different voices” as he read Walt Kelly’s magnificent political satire Pogo to me from childhood on, circa 1957-75. He was born in 1918, in the last great pandemic, and he died just before the century turned. Though Grandad missed the long-wished for Obama presidency, he also missed Trump which I reckon is some kind of blessing. But with all my heart I am sorry that Grandad did not get to see late Western capitalism’s ugly underbelly so thoroughly and baldly exposed. I can hear his cartoon hillbilly voice now saying, “She’s done blowed up! Blowed up good!”

After love, my father’s greatest gift to me was a structural analysis. He taught me to follow the money trail. And he taught me that the problems people create with public policy can be solved—likewise by people—through better public policy.

In March, Vicki Wood, Lincoln librarian, contact tracer manqué and woman about virtual town posted a query on Facebook regarding takeaways from the quarantine experience her friends would like to see. Caring, walking and neighborly goodwill were all popular, along with home cooking, victory gardens, gratitude for small things and wildlife cameos, appreciation for health care providers, for delivery and other essential workers, and of course the drop in carbon emissions and how quickly the planet seems to want to heal.

I’ve been working up my own ‘wish list’ for post-pandemic structural changes, ever since I saw Vicki’s post. With many thanks to contributors (you know who you are), I offer some problems exposed by the pandemic and the large-scale fixes that can transform the mess that we have

into the nation we need, with a final set of smaller-scale best practices for community level recovery, largely gleaned from Strongtowns.org.

Problem: Absent hugely-confiscatory-at-the-top-end taxes on the rich, the federal government cannot afford Everything. Now is no time to be making war. **Fix:** The US needs to reduce military spending by 50% over the next three years, mostly through managed attrition.

Problem: Our democracy (like much of our world) has become effectively an oligarchy, first through (A) corporate concentration and finally through (B) the “Citizens United” decision, wherein the Supreme Court ruled corporations are people.

Fix A: Break corporate concentration to SAVE competition. Despite the quasi-religious attachment of the right to so-called Free Markets, the utter abdication of antitrust enforcement beginning with the Reagan presidency has created one of the LEAST competitive economies in memory. Virtually every sector of our economy is dominated by a very small number of giant corporations which do not have to collude in order to fix the game. This is well understood by the better sort of economists. Some European nations simply practice forced divestment of overly concentrated sectors, triggered by a percentage of captive markets and/or supply, on the grounds that too much concentration is just bad for society. In agriculture for example, the four largest companies control 84% of beef, 66% of hogs, 77% of soybeans and 80% of corn produced. If top four concentration is set at, say, 40%, Smithfield and Tyson, Cargill and ADM would have to sell off much of their holdings, creating more dynamic competitive markets—good for ag producers, good for consumers. The wheel need not be reinvented.

Fix B: It seems unlikely that the “Citi-

zens United” decision can be overturned by a Trump Supreme Court. Our next step is a constitutional amendment to declare that corporations are not people. This is a HUGE undertaking, I realize. Nevertheless, this has GOT to be done. Meanwhile, severe limits on the size of political contributions can be enacted, though in practice there is little to stop corporations from so-called ‘bundling,’ organizing employees (even their spouses and children) to donate as individuals to corporate-friendly candidates.

Problem: The Electoral College is long past its sell-by date. Though sensible, even indispensable, in the days when cross-continent communication was a man on a swift horse with parchment folded in the pocket of his weskit, riding for several months or a man on a ship sailing round the tip of South America for several months, now that we can share election results in real time, the Electoral College stinks to high high heaven. **Fix:** Retire the Electoral College to the Dustbin of History, by Constitutional Amendment if necessary. Whatever it takes.

Problem: National food security requires MUCH less captive supply (see corporate concentration above) and also greater market transparency in agriculture. **Fix:** Strongtowns.org posts, “Nearly every community could produce most or all of the food needed to feed [itself], but none do. This acceptance of dependency crosses nearly every domain of essential need. There are many jobs to be created by recognizing that self-sufficiency is a community value of greater urgency than mere economic efficiency. We won’t get all the way there, but that doesn’t mean it’s not important to work towards it.” Victory garden, buy local and join a coop—vote with your dollar. On a federal scale, national food