2014 Gandhi Award Given To NFP

by Mark Welsch
NFP Omaha Coordinator

Nebraskans for Peace was the recipient of the 2014 Gandhi Award, presented by The Grace Abbott School of Social Work at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Customarily, this annual award—named in honor of the legendary Indian nonviolent activist, Mohandas Gandhi—goes to an individual. But Nebraskans for Peace was honored in recognition of its 44 years of service as the nation’s oldest statewide Peace & Justice organization. This award is a tribute to everyone who has ever been a member of NFP.

NFP President Mark Vasina and State Board member Frank LaMere, a member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, accepted the award on the organization’s behalf from the School’s director, Dr. Amanda Randall. In the audience were approximately 25 NFP members, including long-time activists Loyal Park, Virginia Walsh, El Siebert, Anne Else, Henry D’Souza and Jo Peterson.

Frank LaMere delivered an acceptance speech that had everyone reflecting on NFP’s storied past, thinking about our future, and near tears when he talked about his 21-year-old activist daughter, Lexie, who succumbed to cancer this past January.

The award ceremony can be viewed on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvqTHPixoPjJNwoSdpQf4uO2_fp00mS4_N_S or by googling “Frank LaMere Gandhi 2014”. Printed below are some excerpts from Frank’s comments.

I feel there is no coincidence in what we do. There’s a reason for NFP. There’s a reason you all are here today. There’s a reason you came here. In conclusion on page 2
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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doing the work I do, many years ago I came to that place one time. Maybe it was right before we were to be arrested one time. I thought to myself, ‘What am I doing here?’ I thought, ‘Isn’t there a better way?’ I think the Creator says to me, ‘I want you to go over to do some things, if you’ve got the nerve. If you don’t, that’s okay. There’s other things we have in store for you—to let you work to live your life comfortably—if if you don’t have the nerve.’

Nebraskans for Peace has shown me for over 20 years that they continue to have the nerve. I’m encouraged by that. I rarely listen to anybody in my life. Every day many, many people call and say, ‘We need this, we need this, this is how we need to do it.’ There are too many issues and not enough time. But when Nebraskans for Peace calls and says we need to do this, I say, “Well, we better do that.” I’m pleased, and I want Mark and all Nebraskans for Peace to know that I don’t always jump. But when you call, we always jump, because I know what you do is very important.

I accept this award for NFP, mindful that there are many issues, there are many battles, many efforts that continue today. NFP right now is synonymous with the ongoing issues concerning the Keystone XL pipeline. They are champions on climate change. They continue to work on peace issues. Middle Eastern peace issues. Issues of bullying. They are always on the front line.

NFP over the years has set the agenda for Nebraska on those issues that our elected leaders are afraid to tackle. They make it okay to talk about these things. It takes an organization like that to have the nerve, to have the resolve to say we should do something about these issues.

In that regard, I will remind the NFP that even here, on the UNO campus, that it was the Omahas, Winnebagos, Poncas, Pawnees, the Lakotas who first consecrated this ground on which we live and grow—who first asked for bountiful harvest and protection from the elements. In exchange for that, they told the Creator of all things that we would be good stewards of the land, that we would take care of what was given to us. Covenants have been made and must be respected. In your fight with the pipeline and climate change, always remember that covenants must be respected and that the promises that have been made, we must keep.

It was 90 days ago today that I lost my daughter. I would be remiss to not thank many Nebraskans for Peace who offered words of prayer, words of encouragement and words to live by. She was to be a senior at Creighton University. She had many dreams, many things she wanted to do. In many respects she was like-minded to NFP and myself. People have said those things will be undone and unfilled. I say those things will not be unfilled. Those things that need to be done, those things that she wished to do, will not be unfilled—I will do them. Nebraskans for Peace will continue, you will do them. That is how I believe.

This is a Gandhi symposium. And I thought about that a bit and something that is basic in all of our cultures, and important in my family. When Lexie was graduating from high school, someone asked what I want her to be—as if I had any control over that! The first thing I said was that I want her to be good to people. That is the first thing I remember saying to her; “You be good to him”; “You be good to her.” We were all taught by our parents to be good to people. That is what we were all taught, but then we live and we forget it. Lexie, in her life, learned that lesson that we at NFP try to impart every day in the work that we do.

I accept this Gandhi Award today with the very simple message I was reminded of last night and I remind us of today: you’ve got to be good to one another. You’ve got to be good to one another.
Some Historical Background on the Israel/Palestine Conflict

With the deadly feud between Hamas and the Israeli government having now morphed into full-scale war, it’s important to keep in the mind the roots of this ongoing conflict. The following article by renowned Mideast scholar and political analyst Juan Cole (which is intended as a companion piece to Paul Olson’s “Speaking Our Peace” column on page 12) provides some desperately needed historical background for the human and environmental tragedy that is hourly unfolding in what we know as “The Holy Land.” Cole’s article, “The Map: A Palestinian Nation Thwarted & Speaking Truth to Power,” originally appeared as a July 13, 2014 posting on his “Informed Comment” website: www.juancole.com

As part of my original [March 16, 2010] posting, I mirrored a map of modern Palestinian history that has the virtue of showing graphically what has happened to the Palestinians politically and territorially in the past century.

The map is useful and accurate. It begins by showing the British Mandate of Palestine as of the mid-1920s. The British conquered the Ottoman districts that came to be the Mandate during World War I (the Ottoman sultan threw in with Austria and Germany against Britain, France and Russia, mainly out of fear of Russia).

But because of the rise of the League of Nations and the influence of President Woodrow Wilson’s ideas about self-determination, Britain and France could not decently simply make their new, previously Ottoman territories into mere colonies. The League of Nations awarded them “Mandates.” Britain got Palestine, France got Syria (which it made into Syria and Lebanon), Britain got Iraq.

The League of Nations Covenant spelled out what a Class A Mandate (i.e. territory that had been Ottoman) was:

“Article 22. Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory [i.e., a Western power] until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.”

That is, the purpose of the later British Mandate of Palestine, of the French Mandate of Syria, of the British Mandate of Iraq, was to “render administrative advice and assistance” to these peoples in preparation for their becoming independent states, an achievement that they were recognized as not far from attaining. The Covenant was written before the actual Mandates were established, but Palestine was a Class A Mandate and so the language of the Covenant was applicable to it. The territory that formed the British Mandate of Iraq was the same territory that became independent Iraq, and the same could have been expected of the British Mandate of Palestine. (Even Class B Mandates like Togo have become nation-states, but the poor Palestinians are just stateless prisoners in colonial cantons).

The first map thus shows what the League of Nations imagined would become the state of Palestine. The economist published an odd assertion that the Negev Desert was ‘empty’ and should not have been shown in the first map. But it wasn’t imagined that the Mandate would emerge as an independent Palestinian state within 10 years.

In 1851, there had been 327,000 Palestinians (yes, the word ‘Filistin’ was current then) and other non-Jews, and only 13,000 Jews. In 1925, after decades of determined Jewish immigration, there were a little over 100,000 Jews, and there were 763,000 mostly Palestinian non-Jews in the British Mandate of Palestine. For historical demography of this area, see Justin McCarthy’s painstaking calculations; it is not true, as sometimes is claimed, that we cannot know anything about population figures in this region. The Palestinian population grew because of rapid population growth, not in-migration, which was minor. The common allegation that Jerusalem had a Jewish majority at some point in the 19th century is meaningless. Jerusalem was a small town in 1851, and many pious or indigent elderly Jews from Eastern Europe and elsewhere retired there because of charities that would support them. In 1851, Jews were only about 4 percent of the population of the territory that became the British Mandate of Palestine some 70 years later. And, there had been few adherents of Judaism, just a few thousand, from the time most Jews in Palestine adopted Christianity and Islam in the first millennium CE all the way until the 20th century. In the British Mandate of Palestine, the district of Jerusalem was largely Palestinian.

The rise of the Nazis in the 1930s impelled massive Jewish emigration to Palestine, so by 1940 there were over 400,000 Jews there amid over a million Palestinians.

The second map shows the United Nations partition plan of 1947, which awarded Jews (who only then owned about 6 percent of Palestinian land) a substantial state alongside a much-reduced Palestine. Although apologists for the Zionist movement say that the Zionists accepted this par-
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The partition plan and the Arabs rejected it, that is not entirely true. Zionist leader David Ben Gurion noted in his diary when Israel was established that when the U.S. had been formed, no document set out its territorial extent, implying that the same was true of Israel. We know that Ben Gurion was an Israeli expansionist who fully intended to annex more land to Israel, and by 1956 he attempted to add the Sinai and would have liked southern Lebanon. So the Zionist “acceptance” of the UN partition plan did not mean very much beyond a happiness that their initial starting point was much better than their actual land ownership had given them any right to expect.

The third map shows the status quo after the Israeli-Palestinian civil war of 1947-1948. It is not true that the entire Arab League attacked the Jewish community in Palestine or later Israel on behalf of the Palestinians. As [British/Israeli historian] Avi Shlaim has shown, Jordan had made an understanding with the Zionist leadership that it would grab the West Bank, and its troops did not mount a campaign in the territory awarded to Israel by the UN. Egypt grabbed Gaza and then tried to grab the Negev Desert, with a few thousand badly trained and equipped troops, but was defeated by the nascent Israeli army. Few other Arab states sent any significant number of troops. The total number of troops on the Arab side actually on the ground was about equal to those of the Zionist forces, and the Zionists had more esprit de corps and better weaponry.

[The nascent Israeli military deliberately pursued a policy of ethnically cleansing non-combatant Palestinians from Israeli-held territory, expelling about 720,000 of them in 1947-48, then locking them outside, bereft of their homes and farms and penniless.]

The final map shows the situation today, which springs from the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967 and then the decision of the Israelis to colonize the West Bank intensively (a process that is illegal in the law of war concerning occupied populations).

There is nothing inaccurate about the maps at all, historically. The Atlantic magazine’s writer Jeffrey Goldberg maintained that the Palestinians’ “original sin” was rejecting the 1947 UN partition plan. But since Ben Gurion and other expansionists went on to grab more territory later in history, it is not clear that the Palestinians could have avoided being occupied even if they had given away willingly so much of their country in 1947. The first original sin was the contradictory and reckless pledge by the British to sponsor Jewish immigration into their Mandate in Palestine, which they wickedly and fantastically promised would never inconvenience the Palestinians in any way. It was the same kind of original sin as the French policy of sponsoring a million colonists in French Algeria, or the French attempt to create a Christian-dominated Lebanon where the Christians would be privileged by French policy. The second original sin was the refusal of the United States to allow Jews to immigrate in the 1930s and early 1940s, which forced them to go to Palestine to escape the monstrous, mass-murdering Nazis.

The map attracted so much ire and controversy not because it is inaccurate but because it clearly shows what has been done to the Palestinians, which the League of Nations had recognized as not far from achieving statehood in its Covenant. Their statehood and their territory has been taken from them, and they have been left stateless, without citizenship and therefore without basic civil and human rights. The map makes it easy to see this process. The map had to be stigmatized and made taboo. But even if that marginalization of an image could be accomplished, the squalid reality of Palestinian statelessness would remain, and the children of Gaza would still be being maimed and malnourished by the deliberate Israeli policy of blockading civilians. The map just points to a powerful reality; banishing the map does not change that reality.

People like Goldberg never tell us what they expect to happen to the Palestinians in the near and medium future. They don’t seem to understand that the status quo is untenable. They are like militant ostriches, hiding their heads in the sand while lashing out with their hind talons at anyone who stares clear-eyed at the problem, characterizing us as bigots. As if that old calumny has any purchase for anyone who knows something serious about the actual views of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu or Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, more bigoted persons than whom would be difficult to find. Indeed, some of Israel’s current problems [2010] with Brazil come out of Lieberman’s visit there last summer; I was in Rio then and remember the distaste with which the multi-cultural, multi-racial Brazilians viewed Lieberman, whom some openly called a racist.
Poet and author Mondo E. we Langa has been designated a “Political Prisoner” by Amnesty International for his wrongful conviction in the 1970 death of an Omaha Police officer while he and his colleague, Ed Poin Dexter, were the target of the FBI’s infamous “COINTELPRO” program. Mondo wrote the following “Juneteenth Statement” at the request of Nebraskans for Justice for distribution at this year’s June 21 commemoration in Lincoln.

As an African in the United States, when I think of Juneteenth, it is not the so-called ‘freeing’ of the slaves that I think of, or the announcements concerning the official ending of slavery. Rather, I think of those—such as Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and others—who risked their lives to obtain freedom, not only for themselves and their families, but for all who were being held in bondage.

Chattel slavery was free labor obtained through physical force. Maybe 50 years ago, the saxophonist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, composed a song entitled “Volunteered Slavery.” When a person volunteers to be a slave, he or she is doing something that either does not benefit him or herself or actually works to his or her detriment. And he or she does so without being threatened with physical harm or pain. In this year 2014, while we commemorate the ending of chattel slavery, we have to face the reality that many of us have become volunteer slaves—slaves to clothes with designer names affixed to them, slaves to electronic gadgets, slaves to media hype about celebrities, slaves to the double-talk and rhetoric of politicians, slaves to all manner of mind-numbing nonsense and mayhem. Surely it is a travesty to be rid of one type of slavery, only to replace it with another.

Ed and I have been locked up for more than four decades. In the summer of 1970, while we were still on the streets of Omaha’s African community, the “National Committee to Combat Fascism” Omaha chapter, which we helped lead, was known to sometimes monitor police behavior in North Omaha and to sometimes do so while carrying firearms. But African people in Omaha didn’t fear that our guns were a threat to them. African people in Omaha understood that, if it would come to a time when we would use our guns, it would be for our own defense or for the defense of our community.

Today, too many of our young people—in particular, males—are slaves to guns, slaves to violence, slaves to the idea that their African lives aren’t worth anything, slaves to the idea that their lives are worth living. We didn’t put these kinds of enslavement into their heads. But through our own volunteered slavery, we have cooperated in the bondage to which too many of our youth have fallen victim.

Today, we should be reflecting on what to do to counter the messages being delivered to our children and youth by school curricula; television, movies, video games; the music industry; and other institutions that are making slaves of our youth to violence, materialism, etc. Today, we should be reflecting on what to do to free ourselves from the invisible chains that bind our heads and spirit.

Are We Really Color Blind in Addressing Violence in Our Communities?

by A’Jamal-Rashad Byndon

In recent years, there has been a disproportionate increase in violence in the African American community in Nebraska (particularly in Omaha). An examination of the local crime data from the U.S. Department of Justice, local police reports, the Omaha World-Herald crime reporting process, and the race of inmates locked up in our state’s jails and prisons shows that African Americans have more than their share of crimes committed in their homes and neighborhoods. This steady but documented increase has caused a great deal of cognitive dissonance for many who would like to believe otherwise. Reactions among the state’s African American population run from open embarrassment, to charges of under-reporting of crimes among other constituency groups, to blaming generations of racism and oppression for this higher crime rate.

Regardless of the cause, however, the real question is, can we ever to tamp down this culture of violence that is tearing at our communities, at a minimum, three things must occur.

First, the perpetrators and the victims have got to get together, talk and find a way to come to a resolution. Unless we’re all playing by the same set of rules, injustice will undermine any hope of building community.

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Second, there has got to be one standard of justice by which we all live. Unless we’re all playing by the same set of rules, injustice will undermine any hope of building community. Two quick examples come to mind… The murder of Emmett Till in 1955 by two racist Mississippians who were subsequently acquitted by a jury of their peers. Both men died a natural death, while Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black boy was abducted and brutally killed in a hate crime… Then, the killing in Nebraska in 1969 of Vivian Strong, a 14-year-old African American girl who was merely playing in the public housing units in North Omaha where she lived when she was shot dead by an Omaha Police officer for trespassing in an empty housing unit. The officer was acquitted by an all-white jury. Now some readers will ask why we are talking about things that happened decades ago? Well, this is because those two
Listening to the Future: Omaha Public Power District Works on Maintaining Clean, Renewable Energy

The following article by UNO Communications Professor Bruce Johansen and John Atkeison, Energy Policy Director for the Nebraska Wildlife Federation, originally appeared in the July 2014 issue of Prairie Fire (www.prairiefirenewspaper.com) and is reprinted with permission.

When the Grand Prairie Wind Farm is completed in 2016, OPPD will be generating 33 percent of its electricity from wind.

Omaha Public Power District is Nebraska’s leader in the use of wind power to make electricity, and thanks to a decision by its board of directors, it has maintained the ability to retain that ranking. On June 19 the OPPD board unanimously adopted a plan that maintains a level of clean renewable energy power equal to at least one-third of its generated electricity for twenty years, among other things.

The board and management was responding to years of hearing from the customer-owners of Omaha Public Power District, to regulation by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the encroaching reality of climate changes caused by global warming, a major cause of which is the greenhouse gas pollution produced in the process of making electricity.

And contrary to the cynical predictions of some in the utility industry, rates are projected to rise less than 2 percent, if at all. It is not really surprising, given that utility-scale wind farms now produce electricity at a price equal to or less than coal-fired power plants.

Another less sexy aspect of the plan will help reduce not only rates but also electric bills. When a utility implements programs that help its customers use less energy, these are called demand-side management (DSM) or energy-efficiency (EE) measures. OPPD has committed to enough of these programs (300 megawatts worth) to replace roughly one-half the capacity of its North Omaha Station. The North Omaha power plant is the other big story of this plan. It is one of the few urban plants to burn coal as its primary fuel, and this plant’s pollution has been under increasing pressure to regulation by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the encroaching reality of climate changes caused by global warming, a major cause of which is the greenhouse gas pollution produced in the process of making electricity.

The Wind Story

When the Grand Prairie Wind Farm is completed in 2016, OPPD will be generating 33 percent of its electricity from wind.

Nebraska is a top-tier state when it comes to wind power, ranking third in the USA in its potential to make electricity, yet utilities have been slow to utilize this advantage. As of June 2014, OPPD has one-half the capacity of wind farms in the entire state: 368 megawatts of the 733 megawatts of capacity spinning in Nebraska. When all the wind farms that are under utility contract are completed in late 2015, OPPD will still remain the leader in the state with 813 of 1,308 megawatts of capacity.

How Did It Happen?

The people power that made this historic change of direction possible came from outside as well as inside OPPD. Organizations like Nebraska Wildlife Federation, Nebraska Sierra Club, and Sierra’s Beyond Coal Campaign joined with civic groups including Nebraskans for Peace, League of Women Voters, and Malcolm X Foundation, with faith-based organizations such as Nebraska Interfaith Power & Light and Omaha Together One Community (OTOC), plus many independent activists.

OPPD itself is a large and complex organization that is part of an industry in the midst of radical change. There are traditionalists and advocates for a realistic view of global warming swimming in the currents of the influence of the investor-owned utility culture on the public power culture. One thing that is clear is that the ideas that became the new plan had vigorous champions inside OPPD.

The plan specifics are based on the input the OPPD management team received during their stakeholders process, management’s best judgment about the future regulatory environment, and the utility’s view of their

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OPPD’s process for supplying your electricity will be getting cleaner in the next couple of years, thanks to the input many of you supplied. Customer opinions have led OPPD to a dramatic change in how it will generate electricity in the future.

When OPPD started evaluating options for future energy generation, the Board of Directors said it wanted to know what customers thought. After all, OPPD’s customers are its owners.

Through a several month process, OPPD reached out to customers in public meetings, focus groups and a quantitative survey. Through the process, we narrowed a wide variety of options to five, each of which improved air emissions with affordable cost increases.

Those options were presented to the OPPD Board of Directors in May. The board asked managers to include the latest information on how to help customers reduce their use of electricity, especially at peak times.

OPPD managers then combined that information into three options and recommended one that will cut emission levels on various chemicals and gases by up to 85 percent. After studying the options, the board told management to proceed on that recommendation at its June 19, 2014 public meeting.

The measure will allow the utility to comply with government regulations to reduce future greenhouse gas emissions at its existing power plants while preserving the district’s ability to service customer demand for electricity in the future.

Following the plan, OPPD will shut down three of the five units at its North Omaha Station in 2016 and put stronger emissions controls on the other two units. Then, in 2023, OPPD will quit burning coal altogether in Omaha. Also in 2016, stronger emissions controls will be installed on Nebraska City Station’s older coal unit. It will also enact new energy-efficiency programs for customers and programs to reduce power usage. This reduction will cut OPPD’s need to generate power at key times by 300 megawatts, or 300 million watts.

It’s a comprehensive plan that, combined with additional wind energy already contracted for in the next few years, means the electricity OPPD customers use will continue to get cleaner and cleaner.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Question:** How much is all this going to cost?
**Answer:** Estimate rates should increase no more than two percent. This hybrid option is only slightly more expensive than if we didn’t change our current generation portfolio to adapt to future regulations.

**Question:** How do we know the information was not stacked or presented in such a way that it was designed to get a pre-determined answer?
**Answer:** The process has been very transparent. OPPD utilized a well-known model (IHS/Cera) to provide us with some of the assumptions for these costs. This was validated with the worldwide experience of Black and Veatch to assure that we were using assumptions that have been validated both domestically and internationally.

**Question:** Why isn’t solar part of this recommendation?
**Answer:** We did look into scenarios that contained solar in the portfolio. However, the costs still did not make it economically feasible for OPPD at this time. We will continue to monitor and explore potential opportunities in the area of solar.

**Question:** Will OPPD invest in more wind?
**Answer:** Just last month (May 2014), OPPD customers began using 200 megawatts (MW) of wind generation from Nebraska’s newest wind farm, Prairie Breeze. Within the next few years, OPPD will begin buying the output of the 400 MW Grande Prairie Wind Farm near O’Neill, Nebraska. OPPD estimates about 33 percent of its retail generation will then come from renewable sources. Still, if it makes economic sense and fits into OPPD’s generation portfolio, more wind could be purchased. OPPD will continue to look at opportunities.

**Question:** The recommended option indicated a reduction in personnel. Does this mean job cuts or layoffs?
**Answer:** Since the recommendation won’t be implemented until 2016, more analysis needs to be done on the workforce impact. OPPD will work to minimize the impact. OPPD will work with the unions to ensure that we comply with the Collective Bargaining Agreements.

If you have a question or would like to leave a comment, please visit OPPDListens.com.
responsibility under Nebraska Public Power law.

When OPPD asked its customer-owners’ opinions through this stakeholders process, they were told that it is exactly clean renewables like wind and solar power that people want. This was the high point of this spring’s process.

So Why Now?

What has motivated this rise in the interest in clean renewable power among citizens and utility managers?

In the neighborhoods across America where coal-fired power plants sit, there has been a rising volume of voices calling for the closure of the plants that are responsible for unhealthy pollution. Asthma and heart disease are two of the hazards traced to coal-fired plants; another major pollutant is mercury, a potent neurotoxin.

Price trends in recent years are another factor. Wind power is now directly competitive with coal-fired electricity, and the cost of both wind and solar continue to fall as the costs of fossil fuel and nuclear rise, even under conventional accounting, which excludes cost to the environment as an ‘externality’—that is, a factor that remains ‘off the books.’

Enter global warming, the most expensive calamity the human race has ever faced. A series of sobering reports during the past six months are well summarized by the opening words of the American National Climate Assessment: “Climate change, once considered an issue for a distant future, has moved firmly into the present. Corn producers in Iowa, oyster growers in Washington State, maple syrup producers in Vermont are all observing climate-related changes that are outside of recent experience… This assessment concludes that the evidence of human-induced climate change continues to strengthen and that impacts are increasing across the country.” (http://bit.ly/Nca2014Overview)

The climate disruptions and extremely extreme weather Americans have begun to experience are mostly due to the process of global warming, which is mainly caused by the extra greenhouse gases people have added to the atmosphere. (http://bit.ly/SksDiscussDie1) Even more extreme and hostile changes will arrive well within the lifetimes of most people alive today. (http://bit.ly/DailyCLubchencoLovejoy)

The single largest source of greenhouse gases pollution in the United States comes from making the electricity we depend on. Radical change in the way the electric generation industry has functioned for a century is on the agenda of every electric utility in the country and the world, and has been for 20 years, because we simply cannot cope with the disruption of our climate without reducing and eliminating this source of greenhouse gas.

This also sets up the next big challenge for utilities. Conventional wisdom holds that while coal is the most important source of greenhouse pollution, natural gas will serve as a ‘bridge fuel’ to carry us over to the clean wind and solar power of tomorrow, because burning gas produces around half the CO2 compared to burning coal.

Is that sufficient? It might have been back in the 1970s when some scientists warned that we were on track to start the irreversible melt of parts of Antarctica, the beginning of which has just been documented. (http://bit.ly/NytSoPoleMeltNoReturn) It might have sufficed in the 1980s when another scientist, Dr. Jim Hansen, formally warned Congress that global warming had become a detectable force and that we were in grave danger.

Is natural gas a dangerous bridge to nowhere today? The natural gas burned in power plants is mostly methane, which is a greenhouse gas that is 84 times as potent as CO2. And studies done in recent years show that there is a large amount of gas released in waste and leakage in the process of drilling, fracking, and closing wells, and distributing the gas. Credible scientists assert that the sum of the effects of these releases is that using gas is worse than using coal as a fuel. (http://bit.ly/HowarthMethane20140515)

It is past time to plan the end of the intentional production of greenhouse gases. With this new strategic plan, Omaha Public Power District has taken an important first step toward a clean energy future.

For information regarding the US National Climate Assessment, part of the US Global Change Research Program, visit www.globalchange.gov/what-we-do/assessment.

Information on Omaha Public Power District’s green initiatives can be found at www.oppd.com/AimGreen/Environment/index.htm.

What’s HOT?, conclusion
What an exciting time we had in Washington, D.C., at the annual Citizens’ Climate Lobby conference in June. Lincolnites Lucas Sabalka, JoEllen Polzien and Becky Hruby Seth plus myself from Omaha all learned more about a recent economic study of CCL’s revenue-neutral proposal to tax fossil fuels and return every penny of that tax to the taxpayers. CCL’s proposal, the study showed, would actually provide a boost to the economy—creating over 2.1 million jobs in ten years. We also learned that the food we eat is grown and brought to us using more and more fuel energy each year (we should eat more local, organic food); met with at least 510 of the 535 Members of Congress (MoC) or their staff; and enjoyed getting to know some of the over 600 CCL people from around the world who attended the conference.

We also learned that simply making a declaration can cause things to happen. Here is the declaration I created for myself about the global warming peril:

1. Change must happen.
2. I will work with others to make that change happen.
3. I will find other people who want to work to make this change happen.
4. Repeat 2 and 3 until change has happened.

We need our CCL numbers to continue to double each year in this fight to stop global warming from getting much worse. We need your help to convince your MoC that they should introduce, support, or at least not filibuster against a revenue-neutral bill to tax fossil fuels at the source and return every penny of that tax to the citizens. The return of every penny of this tax to the public will help create the 2.1 million jobs mentioned above.

Many of those jobs will be in the healthcare field, because as the fossil fuel tax goes up each year, people will live longer as a result of the reduction of soot and other pollutants in our air, water, land and food. As we live longer and better, we will spend some of our carbon dividend refund on health care. Many people will also spend their dividends to reduce their carbon footprints by having their homes insulated and by buying more fuel-efficient cars, fuel-efficient appliances and lighting. This spending will create private sector jobs without increasing the size of our federal government or budget.

The four of us were well received in all of the Nebraska representatives’ offices. We talked about how CCL’s proposal would boost job creation and better people’s health. The MoC staff members were attentive and engaged and our discussions were filled with a lot of questions and answers. I look forward to more meetings like those.

We don’t all, though, have to go to Washington in order to impact the political process. All of our members of Congress need to hear from more of their constituents on this issue. Could you write one letter per month, quarter or year to help promote the CCL lobbying campaign? Letters need to be sent to your MoC and the Letters to the Editor column of your local newspaper. To make it easier for you, they can be the same letter! And if you want, you can become even more active by attending monthly CCL meetings and/or by joining us at meetings with your member of Congress and our U.S. senators.

If, like me, you’re worried about the planet warming out of control, there’s a role waiting for you in Citizens Climate Lobby. Call me at 402-453-0776 or send an email to NFPOmaha@NebraskansforPeace.org to let me know you want to learn more about CCL. It’s really easy to make a big difference and you’ll never be part of a more positive political experience in your life!

You can also consider joining me at the CCL Regional Conference in Des Moines, Iowa on November 7, 8 and 9, 2014. I will be organizing carpools to get people there from throughout Nebraska. Please call me for more information.

Lucas Sabalka, JoEllen Polzien, Becky Hruby Seth and Mark Welsch pose for a photo.
HYPOCRISY ABOUNDS!

by Rich Maciejewski
NFP State Board Member

I couldn’t help but think, with the recent explosion of armed conflicts all over the world, how easy it is to be outraged by these events without drawing comparisons to our own government’s actions. It’s like the scripture quotation about seeing the splinter in someone else’s eye and not seeing the board in your own.

All kinds of expressions of anger, disbelief and outrage have surfaced over the recent downing of a passenger plane over the rebel-held portion of Ukraine. Speculation abounds over who fired the missile that did it, and who supplied the missile and technical training to use it. Despite Vladimir Putin’s denials, however, everything points to Russian complicity in disarming weapons to unstable entities.

The plane crash certainly was a tragedy and should not be dismissed or taken lightly, but here is where our self-examination needs to take place. How many times has the United States supplied weapons or given technical training to warring factions or, worse, to ruthless dictators? Some members of Congress have been pushing the President to send weapons to a Ukrainian government with openly questionable ties, and to rebel factions in Syria. Think too about the money and weaponry we’ve funneled into Israel that has aided that government’s systematic confiscation of Palestinian land to build settlements.

Our nation’s history is filled with supplying weapons to ruthless dictators—like the Shah of Iran and Saddam in Iraq. After we’d backed Saddam in his war with Iran, even though we helped build his army and supplied him with weapons, he later used those weapons against us. The same thing could be said about dictators and right-wing governments we’ve propped up and supplied with weapons in Central America, that is now coming back to haunt us. Children and women are pouring over our southern borders to escape the violence and oppression that dictators and vigilante groups and gangs are creating in their homeland—using weapons we may have supplied earlier. Parents are willing to send their children on an unbelievably dangerous journey to get to the U.S. for hope of a decent, safe existence. Think of it. How bad would it have to be for you to send your child on such a journey without you? I can’t even imagine what that would take, but the stories we are hearing from these immigrants shed some light on such risky parental decisions: stories of brothers or parents being shot and killed before children’s eyes, terrible accounts of torture in the homeland or on the way, and young girls raped and/or disfigured if unwilling to follow the dictates of those in power or in gangs.

Where did those weapons come from? Maybe we didn’t give them to those ruthless factions directly, but our country, the greatest arms producer and seller of weapons in the world by far, certainly produced and sold many of them on the open market.

The image haunts me of children and young people who had already witnessed unspeakable violence in their homeland, looking for something better in life here in the U.S., facing angry mobs outside their buses in Texas and California with signs saying, ‘Go back home!’ or ‘We don’t want you!’ The occupants of the bus have to be already scared and hurting, and then to encounter hostility like this!

Right this instant our country continues involvement in two violent, internal disputes that have gone on for years. We are supplying weapons directly and/or providing training on how to use them as the fighting in Iraq and Palestine/Israel continues to escalate.

Iraq is getting more embroiled in internal fighting by the day. How much money, how many weapons and soldiers are we willing to pour into that Sunni/Shiite dispute which we exacerbated by our meddling? Senator McCain and other Republicans want us to go back into that quagmire. Dick Cheney, when asked about any misgivings in his role in declaring war on Iraq over weapons of mass destruction (that never were), could only say “So!” Never mind the fact that we lost over 4,500 soldiers and experienced countless injuries to our troops—to say nothing of the much greater death toll to the people of Iraq.

We have continued to supply Israel with weapons and economic aid for decades. The Israeli government continues to take over Palestinian land and build settlements. And then we wonder why so much of the Arab world hates us. Reports about living conditions in Gaza are terrible. Compare the death toll of Gaza residents to the number of Israeli residents killed in this most recent eruption of fighting. Our involvement in providing some of those weapons to Israel makes us partly responsible for the continuation of the conflict. Hamas or Palestinians supposedly killed three Israeli teenagers. Israelis retaliate by grabbing a teenage Gaza boy, beat him and burn him alive. What kind of barbarism is that for a civilized society? Now both Hamas and Israel are lobbing rockets at each other. I ask again, where are these weapons coming from? We have lots to answer for as a nation, just as Russia does.

Maybe we need to stop spending money on dispensing weapons and spend it on dispensing food and humanitarian assistance instead. Better yet, how about spending it on our own needy in this country? Maybe we need to pay our UN dues on time and work with that organization to solve disputes among nations and factions inside countries. Maybe we need to say to Israel that any more settlements in Palestinian territory will mean that all U.S. assistance will cease.

One thing is certain. We need to stop being the world’s largest producer and supplier of weapons, which in some way is responsible for much of the misery and death we are seeing unfold in the world today.
Sisters in the hood would ask, why is it acceptable to repeatedly recall the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Jewish Holocaust (events that largely impacted white groups), while Native Americans and African Americans are supposed to develop amnesia or just suck it up? For the African American populations, the killings of those two 14-year-old kids were seminal events that epitomized the culture of racism in America.

And finally, the federal government needs to host a national discussion about the trauma the legacy of slavery and institutional racism have inflicted upon African American citizens. When a people have been historically abused, maltreated and brainwashed to view themselves as unimportant and unworthy of a higher quality of life, you have the conditions that are rampant in North Omaha and the large urban centers of this country. Among no other race or ethnic group in the U.S. do you see the ‘drive-bys’ and ‘car-jackings’ prevalent in the African American community, where ‘black-on-black’ crime has reached epidemic proportions. Poverty, lack of opportunity and discrimination only aid and abet this dysfunction. To begin to remedy this situation and promote the conditions for peace-making requires that we as a multiracial community acknowledge some hard truths—that to be black is different from being white and, most of all, these problems exist in spite of our respective denials and predilection to dance around the facts.

A’Jamal-Rashad Byndon, adjunct professor in the Black Studies Department at UNO, is a member of the State Board of Nebraskans for Peace and active with the NFP Omaha Chapter. A Nebraska native and former Peace Corps volunteer, he was one of the founders of “Omaha Table Talk,” a group that organized community discussions on focused on issues of race.

Color Blind, conclusion

traumatic historical events have permanently affected large groups of people and colored their view of the world. As the brothers and sisters in the hood would ask, why is it acceptable to repeatedly recall the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Jewish Holocaust (events that largely impacted white groups), while Native Americans and African Americans are supposed to develop amnesia or just suck it up? For the African American populations, the killings of those two 14-year-old kids were seminal events that epitomized the culture of racism in America.

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defending itself. He did not recognize that Israel does not allow the Palestinians the same right of defense of their traditional territory—never has—and that Palestine, under its 1918 “Mandate” from the British government, was guaranteed territorial protection.

Serious reliance on fact and evidence, in this now generations-old conflict, has all but disappeared from the discourse. In this most recent eruption of killing and maiming, Israel, for instance, does not know for certain that Hamas ordered the killing of the Israeli youths. For its part, Hamas does not know whence came the order leading to the killing of one Palestinian youth and the beating of another. Israel does not know definitively that the Muslim charities and old peoples’ homes it has bombed house Gaza rockets that Hamas keeps sling away at the Jewish State. And the media nowhere demands empirical evidence.

Hubris is at the heart of all this. For the better part of my career, I taught Shakespeare—often Shakespearean tragedy. The lesson of Shakespearean tragedy is that hubris destroys, most often those who feel invulnerable. The Lears, the Othellos, the Macbeths, and the Antonys of the world destroy themselves by their own hubris. The conduct of the Israeli and Hamas leaders constitutes classic hubris: arrogance and self-assurance run amok. (It’s a little-known fact, for instance, that the Israeli government actually helped found Hamas as means of undercutting Yasser Arafat and the secular Palestinian Authority—never expecting their Islam-based creation might turn against them as it has.) And right behind the hubris of the Israeli government and Hamas, there’s the hubris of Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama and their minions who, faced with rockets sounding and burned children, have no capacity for saying, in psychological sackcloth and ashes, “I was wrong”: saying it as a chastened J.F. Kennedy said it after the botched Cuban invasion and Gorbachev said it after having built his career defending the Soviet Union. Make no mistake: Israel could not act without U.S. support; Hamas and its allies could not kill without Iranian and Russian support.

I once wrote that I thought the United Nations could help in the Israel/Palestine dispute. I no longer believe that. The U.S. government will not be a party to any UN solution that requires Israel to sacrifice. It will veto. Hamas does not sit at the United Nations table except through the Palestinian Authority (a tenuous connection at best). But neither Hamas nor its allies in the General Assembly will accept UN-initiated solutions that guarantee Israel’s security. Consumed by hubris, they would rather kill (or be killed) than admit to any error.

Peace groups like NFP can support peace initiatives in Israel and Palestine, but not, it now seems, through a paralyzed international body like the United Nations:

- Nebraskans for Peace can call for churches and other organizations to impose a boycott like that imposed on South Africa’s apartheid regime. The United Presbyterian Church has done so; the Quakers have called for it.

- We can write our senators and representatives to ask them to legislate an embargo on the shipment of weapons to warring groups on both sides (American war planes make up most of Israel’s air force), and for a treaty to end the commercial arms trade that is filling the Developing World with weapons at our and the Russians’ profit.

We can say that 65 years of war is enough. But our tools for ending this now seemingly endless bloodbath are fewer than we once imagined or hoped.
Your Foundation Speaks
by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

Give to Lincoln Day 2014 was a great success this year. We had many more contributors than in the past, but the biggest news is that we more than doubled what was given last year and more than three times the amount two years ago.

This year on-line donations totaled $7,870.00 and off-line donations were $5,505.00 with Lincoln Community Foundation adding their matching amount of $1,846.90. This gave us a gross amount of $15,221.90 and then with Lincoln Community Foundation and Razoo taking out their service charges we had a net amount $14,566.56. This compares to a little more than $6,300 received last year and $4,000 the year before. Thanks to everyone who helped make GIVE TO LINCOLN DAY a great success for Nebraska Peace Foundation.

BULLETIN BOARD

August 9
Lincoln NFP Chapter’s 31st Annual Lantern Float Commemoration of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
(7:30 p.m. on the North shore of Holmes Lake in Lincoln)

August 12
Night of Shooting Stars
(Perseid Meteor Shower)

September 1
Labor Day

NFP State Office Hours in Lincoln, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. weekdays
941 ‘O’ Street, #1026, Lincoln, NE 68508

Israel & Palestine
by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus

And so Israel and Palestine are back at it again—not the biggest conflict in the world or even the biggest in the Middle East. The Shia/Sunni conflict pitting Russia against the U.S., Shiite Iran against Sunni Saudi Arabia, and the intermingled Shia and Sunni regions extending from Lebanon to western Afghanistan involves a far greater geopolitical theater, global energy resources and hundreds of millions of people. In contrast, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict embraces no more than 11,000 square miles and 11 million people. (To provide a sense of scale, Nebraska encompasses 77,000 square miles and only 1.8 million people. Palestine/Israel contains six times as many people as Nebraska in one seventh of the area). Real children, however, are dying from Israeli bombs on the supposition that a Hamas member may live in their house. Real rockets scare Israeli urbanites nightly and disrupt life constantly. The struggle has gone on since 1948. We have been desensitized. “It’s just the Israelis and Palestinians going at it again for a week or two.” But the more than 50-year-old war sits in the center, and the other Middle East conflicts are its entailments.

A few months ago, in the heart of the winter, with the thermometers around zero, the Lincoln NFP chapter, under Bud Narveson’s leadership, set up a panel for discussion of the Israel/Palestine issue—months before the present crisis erupted. Fewer than a half-dozen people came, but the panel was excellent. I was asked to say what I saw in the conflict, and I argued that both Israeli and Palestinian interests demanded rapprochement because Israel is a nuclear power (300 nukes), and the Islamic world will not remain without nuclear weapons permanently—not with the money and the scientific know-how available in the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran have spent so much political capital hammering at Israel that, sooner or later, they will produce the nuclear weapons to destroy it. My co-presenters (more favorably to Israeli than I) spoke even then of the incessant rocket bombardment on Israeli cities, Arab leaders’ hateful remarks, and their failure to recognize Israel’s right to exist. All true. Yet, they too recognized this struggle cannot go on forever; they too saw the looming nuclear issue.

In the poem, “September 1939,” W.H. Auden writes, “Those to whom evil is done, /Do evil in return.” He’s right.

Let me be clear. The Holocaust was as evil as humankind gets. To be specific for a mostly Christian Nebraska, the evil, 20-centuries-long persecution of Jews by Christians enabled the Holocaust. But Israel is now doing its evil in return—perhaps understandable evil but still evil. Their mistreatment of the Palestinians through constant harassment, erection of walls, settlement encroachment, denial of water and enforced impoverishment is systematically marching Palestinians toward removal or extinction. There is no ‘peace process.’ What we call the peace process—the two-state solution—is a sham, recognized in Europe as a sham. Israel will take Palestinian land until only desert, walls and starvation remain. The Arabs will build small weapons, rockets and nukes until a lob of an armed rocket or two destroys the Jewish State.

The editorial board of Haaretz, a liberal Israeli publication, has warned, “[We Israelis] belong to a vengeful, vindictive Jewish tribe whose license to perpetrate horrors is based on the horrors that were done to it... There must be a cultural revolution in Israel. Its political leaders and military officers must recognize this injustice and right it. They must begin raising the next generation, at least, on humanist values, and foster a tolerant public discourse. Without these, the Jewish tribe will not be worthy of its own state.”

I would not go so far, but I would say that things have to change.

The United States has done almost nothing to control its client, Israel. The Palestinian side, beginning with Hitler’s mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and continuing through Wahhabi Islam, has promulgated hatred of Jews and Israelis. But that is by no means the only Islamic reaction to the Jews. The Prophet himself recommended respect for the Jews as People of the Book.

Israel, through its doctrine of Israeli ‘exceptionalism’ and its constant drumbeat on the sins of the Palestinians without recognizing its own offenses, has created and disseminated to the world the vision that its people are superior—more just, more democratic, more “Judeo-Christian” and more compassionate. Netanyahu recently spoke on American television, declaring that any country would do what Israel is doing in conclusion on page 11