Abbie Hoffman once said of a certain adolescent holy man, Maharaja Ji, who enjoyed great popularity in the early Seventies, if the silly young man really WAS God, “he’s the God America deserves.”

I personally do not believe that the “So Called Ruler of the United States” (SCROTUS) could carry Barack Obama’s jock strap. But a quarter of eligible American voters disagreed with me and voted against our first black president retroactively. Gerrymandering is delivering on its long promise to destroy democracy as we have known it. So, SCROTUS it is.

What the rest of us did to deserve SCROTUS is not entirely clear, but it’s looking more and more as if the election of SCROTUS was the ‘Pearl Harbor of Cyber War I.’ If true, Russian cyber battalions (that many) stole a march on the U.S. that makes 9/11 look like no big thing. And may God have mercy on us all.

Seriously, if God now has no mercy upon us, we are in for it. SCROTUS has torn down the doors of the hen house and the foxes are moving in. The list of haters in the Cabinet alone is breath-taking. NATO is very much at risk. Nothing that comes from the mouth of the administration can be believed on the face of it. Why is my government always lying to me? has never sounded more alarming.

But wait. We’ve seen this all before: this is the Face of Evil. FOE, let us call him. The Foe. Every comic book, every action movie, every science fiction novel you’ve ever read has prepared you for this moment. Christianity calls him Antichrist. Navaho calls him Skin Walker. This administration is actually and in fact Evil, in a scientifically-verifiable sense.

We know how Evil comes into the world. All you have to do is abuse a child, and the well of vulnerable children never runs dry. Not every abused child becomes a monster, and it is a testimony to love and human grit that many abused children go on to loving productive lives. The great psychologist Alice Miller spent a lifetime studying the phenomenon: children who survived abuse and thrived, Miller found, nearly always had a memory of one time at least that someone somewhere stood up for them.

But not every child has someone to stand up for him. We will never know what the child must have suffered who became America’s CEO, what terror exactly created the Foe. His madness is so large, this man, I think his childhood must have been unspeakable. That said, he is a sociopath who, through his brand and book and television show and campaign, groomed his supporters in the same way sexual predators groom their intended victims. He flattered them and said he was their friend; he painted a dangerous worldview and himself as a protector; he got up the nose of people they resented;
and he scattered promises like penny candy.

The sociopath takes power by recognizing the Evil in others and gathering it together, until a government is built of Evil, as in Nazi Germany or Stalin’s Soviet Union. Always at the top is a madman and a bully. The Foe fills the corridors of power with thugs. I am referring specifically to Paul Ryan, whose dark eyes glitter with happiness at tax breaks for billionaires and gutting of healthcare and education. Michael Flynn was a loose cannon hungry for a ground war in Iran. Jeff Sessions is Strom Thurmond on steroids. Steve Bannon is mastermind and Grover Norquist the patron saint who made the original sale of the Republican soul to the devil.

Pope Francis said just weeks ago that it is better to be an atheist than to be a Bad Christian. Clearly Il Papa has the Foe and the GOP in mind and is, I am sure, trying to alert His flock. The good news here is the pushback. The March on January 21 and the protests following the immigration travel ban, plus the galvanization of principled elements within the government including judiciary, intelligence and national security and the tsunami of citizen watchfulness and activism all bode well—as long as we hold strong. God helps those as helps themselves, remember.

Evil cannot be dealt with. It must be resisted in the clearest strongest possible terms. Ideally, as America’s CEO’s skull cracks open and the green goo seeps from his coiffure, Congress will step up to the plate and send our ‘made-in-the-USA dictator-wannabe’ into retirement at Mar-a-Lago. I greatly fear that isn’t going to happen, though, or not until a great deal of mischief has been done.

If the Foe is unseated in whatever way without a nuclear incident or martial law declared, much of the damage done by the feeding frenzy of the GOP can be (and in my opinion will be) undone at great bother and taxpayer expense, though this will take years. I believe the Union will weather the storm that is upon us, though cries for secession will rise like wind speeds here on the Great Plains as the earth warms.

Likewise the siren songs of promising Third Parties—-clickbait to bleed away the support we must all bring to the only horse, so to speak, we have to ride in 2018: the Democratic Party. Sadly, Thomas Perez and Keith Ellison are old, like dirt and me. A young progressive leader is needed, like Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, but I guess no one can pronounce his name.

The job of Democrats between now and 2018 is to keep it simple, which is not to say ‘stupid.’ A lot of evidence of bad governance and failure to deliver by the GOP will be the obvious drum to beat. There is a great deal of power in what unites us: income inequality. The assault on the U.S. presidential election makes Putin’s Russia by no means the only party responsible, but it may have just tipped the balance: effectively a stealth Third Party, you could say.

Other inequalities and assaults matter enormously—especially climate change. But ONLY income inequality and the threat to democracy can unite the millions of American voters it’s going to take now to stop all the madness.
Our country has a long history of religious tolerance and sanctuary for the downtrodden from all over the world. However, we also have a long, sad history of demonizing the other. This moment in time is in keeping with the worst of our nativist traditions. Currently, there are over 65 million displaced people globally, including four million Syrians. While most of these refugees are in crowded camps, some countries have absorbed hundreds of thousands of refugees. Meanwhile, in America we have not been doing our share.

Under President Trump’s Executive Order, issued January 27, we would welcome no one. At the moment there is a stay on this order, however President Trump will soon issue a new order. This will mean family members will not be reunited and people whose lives are at risk will be abandoned in dangerous places. Already we are seeing massive deportations of asylum seekers and immigrant workers.

We seem to have no perspective on what we are doing. Refugees undergo more extreme vetting than do our current cabinet members. Furthermore, according to the New York Times, in America, refugees commit fewer crimes than do native-born Americans. Sanctuary cities actually have lower crime rates than cities without large immigrant and refugee populations.

Ironically, it seems as if the people most fearful of refugees are those who have never met any. Employers, neighbors and people who work with resettlement quickly develop great respect for the newcomers. Many times in the last couple of months, I have wondered if either President Trump or Steve Bannon actually knew any refugee families.

As a group, refugees are resilient and enterprising. They may be the last people in America who believe in the American dream. They value hard work and education and they teach their children respect for authority. They bring us new music, foods and traditions as well as important information about the world far beyond our borders.

Lincoln became an official refugee resettlement city in 1998. Last year we settled more refugees per capita than any city in America. Many were from the seven countries banned by Trump’s executive order. We are a thriving community with over 100 languages spoken in our schools. We are a city of Kurds, Bosnians, Vietnamese, Karen, Laotians, Yazidis, Iraqis, Afghans, Somalis, Sudanese, Nigerians and many other cultural groups.

Until recently, most refugees were doing fine in our community. Our schools, our police, our public libraries, our newspaper and our medical systems have been welcoming institutions with translators at the ready. Churches and social service agencies have helped refugees find work and learn about America. Very few refugees experienced harassment.

Even after 9/11, when refugees were frightened that they would be targeted or deported, Lincolnhites showed up to walk their children to school and to reassure them that they were safe in our city. At that time, many Americans were eager to know more about the Muslim religion and the Middle East. We wanted to understand the history and politics of a part of the world that seemed distant.

The Trump administration’s alarmist messages and stereotyping of Muslims has changed the atmosphere here. Every week brings new reports of harassment. Children are afraid to go to school because they are bullied on playgrounds. Women who cover their heads are treated rudely in public. Recently, two men interrupted a family eating at Denny’s to shout that they would soon be deported. Asylum-seekers have lost any hope of being accepted by our country and are risking frostbite to walk into Canada. Foreign students who had planned to stay after college now want to go home. We are no longer anyone’s shining city on the hill.

Last week, I had dinner with a couple who had escaped from Bosnia. Both of them were more frightened now than they had been during their civil war. The woman said, “Before the war, we were just like you. We lived in a prosperous civilized country with no strong divides.”
American Heart, conclusion

We thought our country was stable. But then politicians stoked hatred and division and soon people begin killing each other.”

They can see war coming to America. The hate speech, the demonizing of groups, and the ratcheting up of fear between people all feel familiar to them. These behaviors turned their peaceful democratic country into a madhouse where neighbors killed each other and everything was destroyed.

This couple came to America to be safe and now they do not feel safe. They are astonished that our great country could fall apart so quickly. They believed in American Exceptionalism. They felt we would always have a democracy that protected human rights. But they don’t believe that now.

The woman continued, “I wish we could divide the world into places for people who want peace and people who want war. My husband and I want to go where there is peace.” I speculated that almost everyone would want to go to that place. She said, “You would be surprised. More people than you think would choose war.” I shudder when I imagine what chilling experiences led this kind, loving woman to that point of view.

Because resettlement agencies are paid by the number of new arrivals, programs will disappear now that President Trump as announced that a maximum of 15,000 refugees will be admitted to the U.S before September 2017. In February, Lutheran Family Services, Nebraska’s main resettlement agency cut fifteen staff positions.

More people are refugees now than at any time in human history. Their refugee status says nothing about them except that they were unlucky in geography. However, the unwelcoming attitude that the United States shows to refugees says a great deal about us. All over the world, people can hear what we are signaling about our moral apathy.

Our current federal policies reflect the death of the American heart. Yet, we are a better country than our leadership suggests. Many of our citizens have hearts filled with love and welcome for refugees. Over eighty people showed up at a recent local workshop on how to help refugees. In February, 600 people came to a candlelight vigil, sponsored by Lutheran Family Services, to support our refugees.

If you are one of these Americans who wants to help, please consider sending money to MENA Hope, a center for Middle Eastern/North African refugees at 2617 Y St. 68503 and/or Lutheran Family Services Refugee Resettlement at 2301 O St. 68510.

Dr. Pipher is a clinical psychologist and the author of nine books, including Reviving Ophelia, which was #1 on the New York Times bestseller list for 26 weeks. Her area of interest is how American culture influences the mental health of its people. She lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with her husband Jim. Her passions are her family, being outdoors, birds, books, and protecting her state’s environment.
Yemen is one of the world’s poorest nations. Located on the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen shares a border with Saudi Arabia, one of the world’s wealthiest nations. In 2014, the rebel ‘Huthi’ movement overthrew the Saudi-backed Yemen republican government. That same year Saudi Arabia commenced a heavy air force bombing campaign in Yemen to try to return the republican government to power. Yemen has no air force to speak of.

The ‘Huthi’ rebellion originated in mountainous Northern Yemen in the early 2000s as a tribal and Zaydi Muslim (nominally Shiite) response to what they saw as the then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s intentions to pass the presidency to his oldest son. Hereditary state power, they argued, can only be passed through religious lines consistent with family ties to the prophet Mohammed, or ‘Sayids.’ President Saleh was ousted in 2012 and replaced by his Vice President Abdul Rahman Mansur, but the Huthi rebellion continued to grow as a force against what they saw as corruption endemic to the republican government of Yemen. The Huthi rebellion began to attract Yemenis of both Moslem Shia and Moslem Sunni backgrounds as well as additional tribal and socio-economic backgrounds.

In 2014, Huthi militias marched into the capitol, Sana’a, with very little resistance from pro-government forces and seized power while the republican government fled south to Aden.

Saudi Arabia and their Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) allies (Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) have been bombing the country of Yemen for the past three years in an effort to rid the ‘Arabian Island’ of what they see as a Shiite Islamic threat to the Sunni status quo of the wealthy GCC states. Schools, hospitals, food production centers, seaports, popular trading markets, commercial centers and civilian neighborhoods and homes have been targeted for destruction by the well-equipped GCC combined air forces. United Nations (UN) estimates put the civilian death toll above ten thousand, men, women and children as of January 2017. By targeting seaports and food production facilities the GCC air raids have led to widespread food insecurity and famine in the country—much of the population is now well below a 2000-calorie intake per day.

GCC forces have repeatedly announced intentions to invade Yemen in support of the republican government, but the threat appears to be an idle one as they have been unable to muster sufficient troops for an invasion despite efforts to recruit soldiers for hire from Sudan, Somalia, Colombia and even from within Yemen itself. Apparently, GCC nationals do not have the will or the ability to conduct a land invasion, so the war appears to have hit a stalemate with no political or military solution on the horizon. But with the U.S. and the West still supplying military hardware and in-flight refueling to the Saudi Air Force in its campaign to oust the Huthi rebels, the carnage and destruction continue to rain from the skies… And the crisis in Yemen is fast approaching a tipping point.

With the economy in shambles, traditional agriculture practices disrupted, and port facilities severely degraded, food security is becoming a vital issue for the civilians caught in the midst of this entrenched conflict. The U.N. World Food Program warns that 15 million persons are at risk for starvation in the coming months and an entire generation of children risk becoming permanently disabled due to severe malnutrition. Indeed, images broadcast out of Yemen show severely malnourished children and adults in horrifying states of advanced starvation that the world may not have witnessed since the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s.

A massive humanitarian catastrophe is taking place in Yemen and the world is not watching. Immediate action is required.

Recommendations:
1. Call for U.S. military assistance to Saudi Arabia to cease immediately.
2. Urge all warring parties to accept an immediate ceasefire and return to negotiations.
3. And encourage and support UN and NGO humanitarian efforts, especially immediate and increased food and medicine aid distribution into and throughout the war-torn nation.
“There was a need and I physically could no longer sit there and do nothing.” These are the words spoken by Kjerstin Egger, the woman behind the activist group “We Stand United.” She is talking about the heavy emotions that were almost tangible the day after the Presidential Election. Kjerstin is a ‘Family Engagement Specialist’ at Community Action and works closely with immigrant families. With her background in Human Services, she made the decision that her skills would not go to waste in a time where she saw fear and sadness in the eyes of the families she works with—not to mention the hopelessness in the eyes of friends and even strangers who seemed to be looking for some kind of comfort and productive outlet after hearing presidential speeches with rhetoric that made even some conservatives question their freedom.

We Stand United is not about rebelling, it is about rebuilding. It is a place of unity and for sharing resources on how people in the community can get their voices heard in our local government. The first event held by the group was the day after the election at the State Capitol where Kjerstin spoke to the emotional needs of the people gathered. She spoke of coming together and taking care of each other. The event ended on a high spiritual note with the option to stay for a guided meditation and prayer lead by local healer V.J. Herbert, which most did participate in. This was just what this community needed that day; a safe place to go for words of hope and unity.

Just a month later, Kjerstin saw the need to hold another event to create a space for marginalized sects of our community to share their experiences and talk about ways we, as a community, can be an active support system and advocate for one another—this time with Dr. Patty Hawk, Chair of the Communications Department at Nebraska Wesleyan. The two have since been creating events around the needs seen in the community. The most recent gathering was held at the local coffee shop, “The Bay,” and the focus of the event was to let the community know about how to get involved and what local organizations are doing to address the people’s concerns. Ten organizations, including Nebraskans for Peace, spoke about the work they do and what pressing issues are at the forefront of their efforts. We Stand United events are well-organized and the rooms were at capacity with people eager for these kinds of interactions, again ending with a tearful response to V.J. Herbert’s beautifully sung words of love and peace. During the event, there were three local artists painting and sculpting as they listened to speakers, and the art was then raffled off at the end of the event for added unity in promoting local art.

Kjerstin was gracious enough to invite Nebraskans for Peace back to the next event (scheduled for the middle of March) that will address the next level of need from the community. Speakers will be talking about how and when to write letters to senators, how and when to testify on legislation, and what bills each organization is tracking and what the language means. Nebraskans for Peace is offering to meet with individuals who want to come and observe State Board members while they are testifying on bills. The intent is to have one board member speak with interested activists and share knowledge of a particular bill while another board member testifies on behalf of Nebraskans for Peace.

We Stand United is becoming a hub for local activists. It is a place that gives not only emotional support, but also actions for people to take who share in the feeling of no longer being able to stay quiet on matters of human rights and social justice. Just as we’ve done throughout our history, Nebraskans for Peace is always glad to cooperate with groups seeking to be heard and to create social change.
Racism is at the heart of a big problem in our country: the problem of white people—when compared to people of color—having a disproportionately higher percentage of the good jobs, nice houses in safe neighborhoods, bigger savings accounts, better health, better educational outcomes, fewer deathly interactions with police, lower numbers in the courts, jails and prisons, less contact with child welfare, etc., etc., etc.

Some of us may never have heard ‘the problem’ talked about in just that way. That is because of an interesting characteristic of our culture that causes us to spin the issue of disproportionality as a problem with African Americans and other people of color rather than a problem with white people. So instead we might be thinking, “Oh, the poor things—none of the good jobs, such bad housing in unsafe neighborhoods, no savings, bad health, higher school failure rates, more death by police, so many in the courts, jails prisons, child welfare system… it’s quite unfair, isn’t it? We probably need to sit down and talk awhile about what we might be able to do about that problem.”

Over the last several years, there have been a plethora of events in and around the Omaha area that have focused on the problem of disproportionality. These events have been well-attended. Data has been shared. Speakers have been paid. Big groups have split into smaller groups to talk more about this problem. Committees have developed agendas. Additional data has been examined. Workshops have been held. Leadership teams have been trained. Sometimes even a few voices have been raised. But, what has changed?

All of these events and efforts have been well-meaning. There have even been some positive outcomes. Perhaps folks are thinking about being more inclusive in their planning and implementation. Perhaps they are talking about their own understanding of racism for the first time. Perhaps an African American has even been invited to be a keynote speaker at some gathering.

Unfortunately, none of our local efforts has resulted in any significant change in the cruel costs to people of color of living in a white-run society and at the mercy of systems (e.g., educational, political, social service, justice) that benefit white people to the never-ending detriment of every other population. It’s time to move past the thinking, talking and inviting and to the really, massively hard work of doing.

Why is it so hard to DO anything? Because systems are rigged. Rigged to benefit white people at the expense of people of color. The very structure of our institutions is rigged. The ways that the laws and policies are written that guide those institutions are rigged. The way we teach, the way we learn, is rigged. What organizations are funded and by whom is rigged. Who gets elected and why is rigged. When and where important meetings are held is rigged. When decision-makers choose to be more inclusive, the way folks are picked to ‘represent’ our most vulnerable populations is rigged. The way that problems are identified and issues are prioritized is rigged. What questions get asked, in what order, and by whom, is rigged. So, it should come as no big surprise that the so-called answers, by definition, are rigged. Rigged to benefit white people at the direct expense of people of color.

It is a good thing that at these events people are at least talking about—though sometimes tangentially—the issue of racism. That is good because at long last the real problem at the heart of racial disproportionality is occasionally being put forward. You might think we would be thrilled about that! But, the truth is that we are galled by the way that racism is being discussed. We are galled by the fact that what has surfaced—like a soft, white marshmallow in a cup of dark cocoa—is a repeated conversation about trying to rid our unconscious minds of bias.

Instead of doing the hard work of taking down the bad rigging and re-fashioning our systems from the ground

Conclusion on page 13
What’s Worth Our Fear?

President Donald J. Trump insists he is protecting us from terrorists—insistent enough to turn a national tradition of welcoming refugees in desperate need into horror stories of exclusion. It all runs on fear, and it seems to work with a sizable number of people, despite the fact that the chances that any one of us will be popped off by a terrorist are infinitesimal.

Charles Kurzman, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina, has calculated, according to a report in the New York Times, “that 123 people have been killed in the United States by Muslim terrorists since the 2001 attacks—out of a total of more than 230,000 killings, by gang members, drug dealers, angry spouses, white supremacists, psychopaths, drunks and people of every description. So the [Trump executive] order addresses, at most, one-1,870th of the problem of lethal violence in America. If the toll of Sept. 11 is included, jihadists still account for just over 1 percent of killings.”

So, are we afraid yet? Fear is not rational. Given that, numbers don’t lie. In the United States, any one of us is much more likely (factor of 200) to be shot fatally by a random gang-banger’s bullet or a pissed-off kid at the movies or the mall than an Islamic terrorist.

So, Mr. President, are we the chicken-shit nation, willing to twist our Constitution and traditions into knots to protect us from terrorists—insistent enough to turn a national tradition of welcoming refugees in desperate need into horror stories of exclusion. It all runs on fear, and it seems to work with a sizable number of people, despite the fact that the chances that any one of us will be popped off by a terrorist are infinitesimal.

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Nebraska Peace Foundation’s Statement on Berkshire Hathaway’s Opposition to the Fossil Fuel Divestment Shareholder Proposal

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS UNANIMOUSLY FAVORS A VOTE AGAINST THE PROPOSAL FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

The Board of Directors does not believe that divesting its holdings in companies involved in the extracting, processing, and/or burning of fossil fuels within 12 years is appropriate. The Board believes that Berkshire should not limit its universe of potential investments based upon complex social and moral issues. Berkshire’s businesses and the companies in which it invests have corporate governance structures in place to comply with state and federal laws, including compliance with state and federal environmental regulations and laws which reduce the environmental impact of their operations.

Proxies given without instructions will be voted against the shareholder proposal.

The Nebraska Peace Foundation is baffled and dismayed that Warren Buffett and the board members of Berkshire Hathaway have unanimously voted to oppose its shareholder proposal calling for the company’s divestment of fossil fuels over the next 12 years. The stated reasoning—that investment restrictions intended to avert the worst effects of global climate change would inappropriately infringe upon Berkshire’s business prerogatives—flies in the face of reality and Berkshire Hathaway’s economic self-interest.

Ironically, it was Mr. Buffett’s live-streamed acknowledgement of the threat posed by climate change at the 2016 Berkshire Hathaway Shareholder Meeting that served as the impetus for the divestment resolution. In submitting the proposal with its accommodating 12-year divestment horizon, the Nebraska Peace Foundation was hoping Mr. Buffett would seize on this opportunity to not only divest Berkshire Hathaway of its fossil fuel holdings, but to send a message to the rest of the global business community to follow suit. Especially now—with the U.S., under the Trump Administration, backsliding in its commitment to curb greenhouse gas emissions—we were hoping Mr. Buffett would heed the “Noah’s Law” he himself invoked in last year’s shareholder letter and lead in the construction of the “ark” the entire planet will need if we are to survive the economic and social disruptions caused by climate change.

The disruptions are already happening. 2016 was the warmest year on record, marking the third year in a row of record-breaking global temperatures. Sixteen of the 17 hottest years on record in fact have occurred since 2001. In 2016 as well, the United States experienced 15 billion-dollar weather disasters—just one disaster behind the record of 16 set in 2011. Contrary to the sunny forecast Mr. Buffett offers in his most recent shareholder letter about unstoppable economic growth delivering “increasing wealth to our progeny far into the future,” the consensus climate science flatly warns that our very way of life, not to mention company profits, are in peril.

As internationally renowned climatologist Dr. James Hansen publicly stated in his remarks during last year’s shareholder business meeting, “We are now close to a point of handing young people a situation that will be out of their control, with ice sheet disintegration and multi-meter sea level rise during the lifetime of today’s young people, which would mean loss of coastal cities and economic devastation.”

The U.S. Department of Defense, for its part, adds the further warning of worldwide food and water shortages and waves of climate refugees exacerbating conflict and undermining the U.S.’s national security.

On the critical central issue of climate change, the “Oracle of Omaha” clearly has not grasped the seriousness of what the international scientific community is saying nor the level of emergency we face globally. Climate change is not merely a “complex social and moral issue” as the opposition statement to the divestment shareholder resolution credulously claims. It’s a bedrock economic issue that cuts straight to Berkshire Hathaway’s ability to conduct business profitably. To behave otherwise is short-sighted and risky in the extreme.

The Berkshire Hathaway board’s unanimous decision to oppose the divestment shareholder resolution is, accordingly, profoundly disappointing. Taking Mr. Buffett at his word, we were hoping that he would use this proposal to provide global leadership in shifting the world away from fossil fuels… or at the very least, publicly call for establishing a global price on carbon. Instead, we are getting business as usual that will leave us all vulnerable to the harsh realities of climate change.

For nearly four years, Nebraskans for Peace, the 501(c)(4) arm of the Nebraska Peace Foundation, has been publicly appealing to Mr. Buffett to use his international celebrity to lead on combating climate change, and we’re not giving up hope. Mr. Buffett is without doubt an inquisitive intellect with a broad social vision. And though he’s 86 and time is not on his (or the planet’s) side, we’re hoping that at some point soon he will provide the leadership we need.
Practicing Permaculture in Nebraska: A Short List

by Gus von Roenn PDC
Omaha Permaculture

To many people who hear the term ‘permaculture’ for the first time, even a succinct definition needs an elaborate explanation. Because permaculture addresses a wide variety of topics, a quick ‘elevator speech’ of permaculture necessitates a slow elevator and at least 20 floors for a thorough explanation. For this reason, this essay will simplify the wide world of permaculture into easy steps for every Nebraskan’s daily life.

For the purposes of this essay, the definition of permaculture is the pursuit to feed, shelter, transport and energize your life in your community without compromising the integrity of the world’s living environment. Working with nature allows us to achieve our goals with minimal maintenance. Poorly designed landscapes, buildings and technology that attempt to counter the forces of nature add complexity to our lives and create dependence on a complex system that needs maintenance. With this definition and guiding ethic in mind, here’s a list of sequential permaculture practices that can be adopted for your own personal use.

1. The first step is to observe your life and land seasonally; and take notes. Notice routines, consumer trends, travel, health, fossil fuel use, plastic use, and social routines. Be real with yourself and try to face the tough work of simplifying the home, your employment life and your community so that your life is efficient, fluid and satisfying. If you are not happy with your life, permaculture will help. But you have to be honest about lifestyle changes and embrace the commitment toward improving the health of your environment.

2. Get to know your neighbors and your community. You are an important part of a group of people in your living environment that can make life easier for you if you only knew who they were. Like family, communities can come to the rescue when life is difficult or when there is a big community project to accomplish. You would be surprised at the amount of skilled labor and extra time your neighbors are willing to offer when you get to know them. Your neighborhood and the people around you are your greatest resource.

3. Identify lifestyle steps that can be simplified toward eliminating your carbon footprint. Drive less; use public transportation; ride bikes for transportation (not just recreation); install solar and geothermal energy systems; insulate roofs and north sides of houses/buildings; build homes/structures into south-facing hill slopes for passive solar; extend roof eaves to block summer sun into south-facing windows (but allow winter sun); install small skylights half way up a vaulted ceiling for less heat loss (not at the apex); minimize north facing windows; site windbreaks to the northwest and shade trees to the southwest; use rocket stoves, masonry stoves, biomethane digesting; and overall just practice conservation to reduce both your energy use and your carbon footprint.

4. Reduce your daily discarded waste. Try to return everything you discard back to the earth as a composted item or as food for other animals. Discover how wastes can become resources. Learn how to repair items that can be repaired. If it cannot be repaired, can the item be altered or up-cycled to fit another function? If something like e-waste has to be discarded without much potential for upcycling, please make sure it is discarded at a professional e-waste establishment.

5. Grow your own food and herbs. Don’t worry about growing everything you would ever need. Focus on growing items your neighbors are not growing so you will always be valued for your contribution to the seasonal community spoils. Concentrate on growing perennial crops like tree fruits and berries as much as your annual vegetable favorites. Grow what you love and like to eat. But also branch out and explore. Put in a perennial asparagus patch for a maintenance-free early green vegetable. Erect a plastic-covered hoop house to grow lettuce and spinach all winter long. If you love mangoes, try growing pawpaws instead. With the assistance of a greenhouse, there is very little that cannot be grown in Nebraska. Russ Finch in Alliance, Nebraska has proven to everyone that oranges, figs and lemons can not only grow here, but they do NOT need to be sprayed with pesticides. Lastly, grow food for nature too—particularly the pollinators who help produce our human food.

6. Collect rainwater in tanks and within your landscapes. In contoured landscapes, slow down the movement of downhill moving water with terraces or swales. By conclusion on page 12
Many Nebraskans are very familiar with the concerns associated with large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Impacts to water, air quality, socio-economics, horrendous contractual agreements that turn farmers into indentured servants, and labor abuses typically contribute to detrimental effects that diminish a community’s quality of life.

In regards to the proposed Costco Poultry Operation near Fremont, area residents are letting their concerns be heard, as many key questions have still not been addressed. This begs us to ask the question, “When will Costco, or other large corporations that come into our state, learn to start doing business like Nebraskans do business?”

This isn’t the first time we have seen large corporations try to force themselves into our state while hiding from a public discussion. In the recent past, business approaches from the meatpacking and the fossil fuel industries (such as the recent case of TransCanada) have exemplified unethical practices that have left many of us in Nebraska with a bad taste in our mouths. Nebraska is a strong pro-business state, and our principles have guided us towards business practices that respect one another. And most of us do not believe good business means profiting at the expense of others’ well-being.

Costco’s approach so far looks like an all too familiar play out of the old corporate playbook. In the initial planning stages of Costco’s “Project Rawhide,” residents in the Village of Nickerson had to find out second-hand that Costco was looking to locate a massive poultry operation in their backyards. Neither Costco, the Fremont Development Council (who has led efforts to develop the project), nor the Fremont city government made any attempt to reach out to the public to gather citizens’ input on the project. When residents demanded public meetings, Costco hid behind local proponent groups instead of confronting community members in person. This led to a unanimous vote by the Nickerson City Council to move the project out of the general area.

Shortly after, Costco and Fremont officials, announced a new location south of Fremont. What followed was a set of ‘public’ meetings in Fremont, in which Costco gave a presentation to Fremont area residents about how they were ‘exemplary corporate citizens.’ In addition, presentations by state and city officials were given at the end of the meeting (when much of the crowd had left) dismissing many anticipated public concerns. The public, although not allowed to speak on general issues outside of the meeting agenda, stood up and voiced their concerns anyway. That was eight months ago, and many of these concerns are still unaddressed.

While there are numerous unanswered questions, one of them is crucial and imperative. If this project were to be allowed, would it further endanger the quality of our state’s precious water resource? This concern does not just apply to Fremont; the larger community of Eastern Nebraska, where approximately one million people reside, would also be affected.


Nitrate levels in Nebraska have continued to increase with the growth of agricultural industrialization. Excessive nitrate exposure can cause health issues like Blue Baby Syndrome, which can be deadly in infants, and in some cases various forms of cancer, thyroid conditions, reproductive issues and diabetes.
Costco, conclusion

Costco’s proposed operation is unlike anything else our state has seen. The project would process approximately 350,000 chickens per day, with a feed mill and a hatchery, located in a floodplain adjacent to the Platte River. Discharged waste would be dumped into the Elkhorn River, just upstream from the Ashland wellhead location that provides drinking water for Lincoln residents. Over 17 million chickens will be housed in approximately 450 barns spread out over an 11-county area, all upstream from the Omaha and Lincoln metro areas.

To put this into perspective, these chickens would generate approximately 3.9 million pounds of waste per day, which is about twice the amount of human waste produced by the City of Omaha according to a research letter produced by John Hopkins University. The litter would be required to be spread out perfectly to ensure there is no runoff into our waterways. During heavy rainfalls, events which we are experiencing more often due to the volatile conditions caused by climate change, it will be nearly impossible to ensure some of this litter does not runoff, and that we do not further pollute our increasingly contaminated waterways.

At recent informational events held in Omaha and Lincoln by 14 coalition groups including Nebraska Communities United, the League of Women Voters, and Omaha Together One Community, experts from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and from the Des Moines Water Works Utility warned that there could be a significant impact to our water quality. They stated it is up to us to decide if the benefits of a project like this outweigh the risks. The resounding response from area residents was NO, risking the quality of our water is NOT a risk worth taking.

In the coming months it will be crucial for the larger community of Eastern Nebraska to weigh in and fight to ensure our resources will not be put at risk. Opportunities for engagement will come in several ways including an upcoming public permitting process with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ); supporting Senator Carol Blood’s LR4, commissioning an interim study in the Legislature on water contaminants and how they affect our water quality; engaging with our elected officials at all levels; and, of course, holding Costco accountable for their back-room business practices. The development of Costco’s “Project Rawhide” must be a discussion held beyond just the Fremont area.

Nebraska is a state with a rich history of doing business the right way. It’s up to us to ensure we protect the business interests of our state, which includes protecting farmers from being manipulated by corporations at the expense of our air, our water and our way of life. These risks should provoke alarm for Nebraskans. After all, our recent experience with TransCanada reminded us that most corporations don’t do business like Nebraskans, because they are not Nebraskans. That’s why we need to let Costco know that while we’re pro-business, Nebraskans value ethical business practices based on solid moral principles. 2017 will soon tell us what kind of community steward Costco really is.

Permaculture, conclusion

not raking leaves or mulching plants, this helps hold the water in the soil longer with less water lost to evaporation or runoff. When collecting rainwater in tanks, please use more than one rain barrel as one 55-gallon barrel will irrigate an average-sized garden for a day or two in a drought.

7. Save seeds of perennial trees and plants that are successful in your area and replant them in areas that can benefit from more diversity and habitat. Guerilla gardening is a great way to beautify dilapidated areas with new foliage. Start your own hobby tree nursery.

8. Manicure your yard less. Instead of mowing every inch of your yard, allow some places to become natural. Let low spots overgrow and become wetlands. Don’t mow so close to the trunks of trees. Allowing habitat for nature’s creatures means they will less likely come into your home. A manicured lawn is a desert to most creatures. Do not use pesticides or herbicides. Poisons kill some parts of the food chain creating imbalances in nature, allowing the proliferation of one species to create pest problems.

9. Buy local. Use a local credit union. Divest from fossil-fuel backed investments. Use cash or trade whenever possible. Your dollar spent in the local economy is the most powerful dollar spent. The value of consumer interactions should benefit the local economy—not foreign banks and corporations. Donate to your local nonprofits. Help your neighbors.

Permaculture is most effectively used as a design strategy for land stewardship systems. However, it is still useful to understand all of the little mundane moments in our lives that can enhance our cohabitation with our living environment. With this short list, I invite you to permaculture your community.
up, based on REAL equity and REAL inclusion, we are sitting around talking about implicit bias—which the authors of this article have taken to calling the “least bad racism.” Implicit bias can be defined as individual racial prejudice that is unconscious. In other words, it is not overt hatred or dislike for people of other races and ethnicities; it is covert, subconscious, undercover, some would say inbred. It is “less bad” than overt racial hatred. And, it is “less bad” than systemic, institutional racism.

The truth is that implicit bias absolutely, one hundred percent exists. And we all suffer from it in one way or another—it’s a guilt and shame we can all share in. And, it has truly negative effects on people. And, implicit bias should be addressed. But we see it as unhealthy that the major focus for achieving racial equity is now on implicit bias, because it implies that individuals and their unconscious minds are the major problem. And that lets our rigged systems off the hook.

An inner city school system with hardly a black teacher in sight… state and federal legislatures with nary a black face… public school curricula that requires the reading of no black authors… child welfare workers who are overwhelmingly white, middle class women…. the school-to-prison pipeline… the mass incarceration of black men. Do we really believe that trying to get the white people who run things to alter their unconscious thoughts will fundamentally transform all of that?

The work on implicit bias is not utterly pointless, and it does warrant some attention, but it should be 25 percent of the effort or less. Unfortunately, it’s not just whites who seem to like this focus on unconscious individual prejudice—black people have been hoodwinked, too. And, for the purpose of maintaining the status quo, who better to carry the message of the least-bad-racism but black folks, themselves? They give the message that ‘afrosheen’ of integrity.

There are no scientifically validated methods of curbing implicit bias. On the other hand, changing laws, policies and practices can have a direct, measurable impact on leveling the playing field.

Affirmative action policies are a prime example of race equity that works: race preferences for government contracts, college admissions, political representation, and hiring. These are examples proven to work to change disproportionality.

For this kind of truly fundamental change to happen, it will mean giving up our hopes and expectations for the most vulnerable among us to do the heavy lifting. DOING something is going to mean that those of us with more privilege are going to have to give some of it up. That’s the only way to change the rigging.
them may be throwing rotten tomatoes at pictures of Donald Trump (and other knuckle-draggers) in the Greenhouse Gas Museum.

By then, the New York City Trump Tower’s first floor may be underwater, and ISIS probably will be long gone. Most of the territory they claim as their caliphate may be too hot and dry for human habitation several months of the year.

Evidence of the Real Threat

Evidence of the real threat is all around us. Climate weirdness continues to make headlines. Ice melted at the North Pole in November of last year. On December 22, ice was melting around a weather buoy 90 miles from the North Pole as a reporter quipped in the Washington Post: “Santa may need water skis instead of a sleigh this year.”

Christmas Day brought Nebraska and Kansas something really unusual: strong, spring-style thunderstorms. Nebraska recorded its first Christmas tornadoes, three EF-1s, about 200 miles southwest of Omaha. After five consecutive years of withering drought, California in January and February of 2017 was swamped by damaging, record deluges.

In the meantime, Donald J. Trump declared a “mandate” in a United States presidential election that he had lost by nearly 3 million popular votes as he called global warming a Chinese hoax. Climate scientists working for the federal government backed up their data on private flash drives lest appointees of the new regime destroy their public databases. Who might have guessed 20 years ago that our imaginary glittering bridge to the third millennium would have an off-ramp to the dark ages of scientific denial among our so-called leaders, the entire truth-challenged crew?

Carbon dioxide isn’t having a debate with Mr. Trump or the other climate-change deniers. It merely holds heat, and the higher its level rises, the more heat it retains. Rising carbon-dioxide levels change everything, even the acidity of the oceans, where everything that lives in a shell is at risk. That includes plankton, the base of the maritime food chain.

So, what’s worth our fear?

Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is the author of the forthcoming Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions.
in Germany not because Hitler won an election but because, when he reached beyond his constitutional powers after the election, few people or institutions said ‘No.’ Many of us are saying ‘No’ and resisting, so there is hope.

Resistance requires focal points. In Nebraska, the resistance to the military-industrial state centers in Nebraskans for Peace. Other organizations such as the ACLU, the organizations defending people of color, environmental organizations, the Appleseed Center, the Center for Rural Affairs and Bold Nebraska are doing important work. But the great shift has gone from the 1930s government focused on our people’s care to a government subsidizing corporations producing weapons to kill. That shift is uniquely Nebraskans for Peace’s to resist.

Nebraskans for Peace will be 50 years old in 2020. Hope has been our daily task, and it must be our discipline in the future. Nobuko Tsukui, Nebraskans for Peace’s great patron and opponent of the nuclear arms race, recently sent me a 1966 picture of the founding of a group called Nebraskans for Peace in Vietnam. A few Lincoln clergyman, students and professors are meeting in a stuffy living room and seem to be conversing about the escalation of our role in Southeast Asia. All wear suits and ties. The clergy-men look stiff as Romanesque statues. But they reflect hope.

Other images come to mind:

- I remember the students gathering in the UNL ROTC building to protest Kent State and hope for a more just nation.
- I remember my early speakers: Don Luce, who discovered the tiger cages for prisoners in Vietnam; Richard Barnet, who first warned us of the power of the multinational corporations and militarism; Randall Forsberg, who started the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign and early in the game came to Nebraska to fight for the cause; Isabella Letelier, whose husband was killed by the Chilean tyranny of Pinochet, who spoke of what the U. S. was doing in Central and South America with its untrammeled military interventions. They imaged hope from the depths of tragedy.
- I remember when my wife Betty, tremblingly, went to work to coordinate Nebraskans for Peace and chose as her co-worker Mary Alice Park, beginning a lifetime of service to peace and justice.

These memories are rich, rich with hope and reminders of the people who suffered for opposing the military-industrial complex: who lost their jobs, who had their cattle threatened. I remember those who, like Larry Zink, went to jail for hope.

Those NFP people are part of a Nebraska line reaching back to the early Quakers, Mennonites, and Amish, to the 1890s Populists; to William Jennings Bryan and the Democrats who opposed the Philippine-American War and Wilson’s efforts to get us into World War I; to C. A. Sorensen and his role in the pre-World War I peace ship; to the peace organizations that existed between the two world wars; to the Church of the Brethren’s Dwight Dell and his solitary run for the Senate, opposing the Korean War; and to Herbert Jehle, Abraham Muste, and the Lincoln Quakers who marched for the first time in American history against Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. They are our history. They are our heritage.

Now, we, NFP, are almost 50 years old. We are the focus of Nebraska resistance. But to move into the future effectively, we need more members and more money. The Nebraska Peace Foundation has about $2 million in pledges and in extant monies for its permanent endowment. The dividends from the less than a million-dollar permanent endowment that we have on hand saved Nebraskans for Peace this year when the wonderful monies that we received from the “Cat Lovers Against the Bomb Calendar” (thanks to Mary Alice and Loyal Park) no longer came in. This year we received $17,000 from the endowment to pay some of the shortfall. As inflation begins again and the first visionaries who founded Nebraskans for Peace die off, we believe that we will need a $4 million endowment to sustain us. Survival—not the survival of an organization, but of a kind of people—is what is at stake.

The Nebraska Peace Foundation is considering a drive between now and 2020, its 50th anniversary, to double its money. The money generated does not have to come in million dollar or even $10,000 amounts. Many people could include something like $5,000 or $2,000 or a hundred dollars in their wills to generate resistance to the tyranny that is upon us. And for those of you who have a larger vision and a nest egg: nothing could help resistance more than giving of the very core of what you have—to say ‘No.’ Please tell us what you are doing or will do.
Speaking Our Peace

by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus

The Focus of Resistance for 50 Years

On March 16, Donald Trump released his budget containing 54 billion more dollars for military spending in addition to the $1 trillion for nuclear weapons modernization. Cut is some of Meals on Wheels, gone are the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, money to protect the environment, and virtually all spending to protect civil rights. Present are massive reductions in scientific and health-related research; in spending for affordable health care, including rural hospitals; reductions in the Women, Infants and Children nutrition assistance program that keeps many a child from starving; and in almost everything benign that our government does.

(Trump includes the money for the Mexican wall.)

The movement away from democracy to a military-industrial state that began after World War II and escalated with Reagan and the Bushes, has culminated in the Gilbert and Sullivan presidency of Donald Trump—one governed by a Steve Bannon who loves the French Nazi philosopher, Charles Maurras. Nebraskans, though skeptical of Hillary, did not vote for Nazi ideology, but Donald Trump’s minions, including those from Nebraska who sit in our national Congress and profess Christian values, say almost nothing about the tyranny. They wait for the crumbs to fall from their master’s table.

The promising political development of the last few months has been the resistance to despotism. Millions of people have said ‘No,’ as has much of the press. Remember that Nazism took over...