

The MILITARY & the ENVIRONMENT

by Sr Maryanne Zakreski, SSJ - Catholic Peace Fellowship
and aide at St. Helena Outreach Ministries in the Olney section of Philadelphia

"We must set up a cooperative relationship with the earth, not one of dominance, for it is ultimately the gift of life that we pass on to our children and the generations to follow." Rosalie Bertell, Planet Earth -- The Latest Weapon of War. **continued on page 9**



My Name Means Joy

by Sr. Dr. Jocelyn Edathil SIC, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine and Member of the
Sisters of the Imitation of Christ, Eastern Rite Catholic Community.
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Ecological Conversion

by Sr. Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ - Educator since 1962, and volunteer at the Catholic Worker in New York, Genesis Farm, and in El Salvador during the civil war and South Africa before the release of Nelson Mandela.

April 22 is Earth Day. This designation was introduced in 1970 by Senator Gaylord Nelson. He wanted to get the attention of his constituents and the rest of the world. Not that every other day would be excused from environmental care but to raise up the critical nature of Earth as a living organism that is dying daily because of human disregard. Rarely did we hear anything to remind us to care for creation from our Church leaders. Pope Benedict XVI was named the "Green Pope" after he spoke to the world's youth in Madrid, Spain in August 2011. He authorized the Vatican's bank to purchase carbon credits by funding a Hungarian forest that would make the Catholic city-state the only country fully carbon neutral. And several years later, he unveiled a new hybrid Popemobile that would be partially electric. From that moment on, the Vatican has become a beacon of light for the issue. At the request of Pope Benedict, solar panels were added to the roof of the Vatican and the Pope himself reduced his own carbon emissions.

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Ecological Conversion - continued from page 1

Pope Francis went further and wrote the first papal encyclical about the environment called "On Care for our Common Home or in Latin 'Laudato Si' (Praise Be to You). In it he calls for much more serious changes in the lifestyles of Catholics. For instance, Pope Francis has coined the term "integral ecology." By this he means the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. So, for instance, he says this necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society and the need to question certain models of development, production, and consumption.

For example, in the traditional development of coffee, a large amount of water is needed so some farmers are not able to harvest the coffee beans in a sustainable manner. Large agrobusinesses can overproduce and thus cut out the smaller farmers from the market. Similar issues happen with the production of meat from cattle. Cattle need grass to eat so many acres of grass replace acres that could be used by small farmers to grow food for their families. Maintaining sustainable farming in places with few resources is a challenge for small farmers. Doing the right thing in places where there are limited resources becomes difficult. Today, we must find ways to collaborate with each other and become the one body of Christ we profess to be.

All is One

My vision of a future
Shows humans at the
Service of nature in such a way it creates a new lens
Formed on the surface of the human eyes
To see how all of life was meant to be
A harmony of interaction - Mutuality.

No longer will there be a force that dominates
For selfish gains
But only cooperates for relief of suffering and pains.
The flourishing of minds in ways that foster love
And wisdom, beauty, science, faith and zeal.
A new awareness of the Spirit
Within, coaxing unity and joy.

Who will begin to manifest this New Way?

None but those awake now to the awareness
Showing itself already from deep within the psyche.
Be silent.
Let go of Ego.
Sit in contemplation as the Soul opens
To this movement of the Great One deep inside.

Still the frenetic mind.
Slow the pace of work.
Just be.
For now Earth teaches once again.
From her, humans learn a way of life.
To move in harmony and synchronicity.

Watch the little ones.
Observe the redwoods, contemplate the mountains, rivers and seas.
Be still enough to let the raindrops in.
A flowering bursts forth as awareness finds a home.
In every system now in place, to light the dark, to warm the cold or move the food.
No longer will the human trample underfoot the life that bore the seeds of long ago.
Woman now is heard for who she is within our Earth Community.
Her wisdom revered.
Be still.
Just be.
One is.

Sr. Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ

CPF Annual Retreat (Virtual) Laudato Si – Examen April 17

April 17, 2021 - Saturday Morning 9:30 to 12 noon with introduction by
Angie and Phil Berryman

Fr. George Bur S.J. will introduce an Examen format based on the
Papal Encyclical "Laudato Si." Father Bur, a Jesuit priest for sixty
years, has assisted retreatants to find God through the Ignatian Spiritual
Exercises. An Ignatian Examen is a short daily renewal of such grace.

Angie and Phil Berryman are academics, authors, and activists, who
also worked for the American Friends Service in Latin America.

For Zoom Link / call-in number see www.CPFphila.org or email:

catholicpeacefellowship.phila@gmail.com or dial 1

646 876 9923 then enter when prompted the Meeting ID: 828 4413 9642 #
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82844139642?pwd=WmVKeEdicEVlbiZlWUUNJz0xSlJaZz09>

(RSVP encouraged, not required)

Zoom link and updates also posted:

<https://www.facebook.com/catholicpeacefellowship.phila>
http://www.cpfphila.com/CPF_Meetings_And_Events.html



Making Peace with Nature

by Scott Fina

Scott lives in Santa Maria, CA and this article was previously published in the Santa Maria Times and its affiliate media.

“Man's attitude toward nature is today critically important simply because we have now acquired a fateful power to alter and destroy nature. But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.”

Environmentalist Rachel Carson spoke these words shortly before her death in 1964, recorded in a CBS documentary on her prophetic book, *Silent Spring*. (Natural Resources Defense Council, August of 2015, <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/story-silent-spring>)

On February 21st of this year, the United Nations Environmental Program released a report on the state of our planet's environment titled: *Making Peace with Nature*. (<https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>) The report is an alarming study of humanity's faltering effort to counter climate change and remediate its ever-deepening devastation on global society and life itself. The report explores numerous interlinking aspects of human activity impacting the biosphere that sustains our species: economies, technology, cultures, governments, agriculture and food sources, water sources and drought, energy, disease, and growth in human population.

Making Peace with Nature offers humanity a way forward to save itself and its co-lifeforms. It organizes its blueprint for survival under the tension between two divergent paths: humanity's transforming of nature (leading to self-destruction) vs. humanity's transforming of its relationship with nature (leading to a sustainable future).

In a way, I find the UN's prescription for human survival to be old news. *Making Peace with Nature* articulates a maxim held long ago by ancient peoples. The maxim was handed down to me by my parents, but not in so many words.

When I was ten, my father convinced my mother to move further away from his workplace so our family could live in the country. My parents purchased a ten-acre property that had formerly been a farm started 150 years before we moved onto it. I ran amok on it as a boy. It was wild with a swamp and a wooded hillside full of maples, ash trees, birches, cedars, and pines.

I remember surprising a white-tailed buck in our woods, walking up within a few feet of a great blue heron near our swamp, and hearing bullfrogs during summer dusks and honking Canadian geese passing overhead in late fall and early spring. We also shared our property with muskrats, raccoons, milk snakes, dragonflies, salamanders, and mallard ducks. We drew water from our own well.

All this is why my parents bought and loved the land I grew up on.

My father died suddenly when he was only 46 and I was 17. This was a confounding experience for me. Not only did I miss him, but I had lost the opportunity to have some important conversations with him—especially to tell him how I so admired and loved him.

My father is buried on a hill down the road from my former home. (My mother was also buried there many decades later.) The cemetery dates back to the 1760s. Countless times I visited the grave, usually near sunset, to speak with my father and say things I never got to tell him when he was alive. You can see our old house and all ten acres from the gravesite.

With the help of my parents, I learned something important by exploring those ten acres: that the land I grew up on never really belonged to my family--nor does it really belong to the family that holds its deed today. I discovered instead, what it means for “people to belong to the land.” That's the truth that lies at the heart of *Making Peace with Nature*, and the reality that must guide us to save ourselves and our world.

Balance in the Common Home:

Post-pandemic Guidelines from the Perspective of the Indigenous Concept of Full Life

by Fr. Joe Fitzgerald, C.M. - Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers and Brothers),
a Philadelphia native who has worked among the indigenous Ngäbe people in Panama for over 15 years.

When lightning strikes near a Ngäbe house, tradition requires summoning people (for a period of four days) to participate in the traditional “Jeiki” dance. The dance involves all the guests, placing their arms on the shoulders of the person in front of them, thus forming a long line and following the steps and the beating of the maracas and the sacred songs. In one of the ancient myths that explains the cosmic order of the Ngäbe, lightning is a twin who ascended into heaven, while his sister, turned dragon, went into the sea. The dance, at this time, is intended to “scold” the lightning, so that he knows that he is not welcome near the place of the family dwelling and that it would be better to strike the place where his sister dwells, namely in the sea. The sacred dance is intended to restore the cosmic order, where all beings have their place and function.

There are many Ngäbe examples that focus on maintaining a natural balance; the cycles of the earth — sowing, caring and harvesting — are accompanied by rites and practices that recognize the order established by Ngöbö (God). The “Dänkien” or guardians of the various species protect them and send messages to humans when they exceed appropriate limits/boundaries at home or when fishing.

An elderly Ngäbe, speaking about the importance of being humble in the face of the mystery of God that is revealed in his act of creation and about our responsibility to maintain a natural balance, stated: “We must not change what God has done. We must leave creation as it is, not make big changes. Sometimes we have to knock down the mountain, but that is to plant and to survive.” The Ngäbe, like other indigenous peoples, have maintained reciprocal practices for thousands of years because they have understood that every action has a consequence and therefore, it is up to them to understand their place and responsibility in the plan of the Creator. The Ngäbe are active participants in action of perpetual creation.

The Pandemic and Natural Balance

We have seen the images of places in the world where the environment has improved due to the decrease in tourism, traffic, and industry during the pandemic. We are struck by seeing crystal clear waters in rivers and canals for the first time in decades, satellite photos of pollution-free cities, or wild animals confidently entering urban areas. These images point to the natural imbalance that an indifferent world has accepted in the industrialization process. However, they can also be signs of hope, examples of the possible restoration of the planet if we commit ourselves to doing this together as a human family.

The relatively new discipline of “Planetary Health” focuses on the relationship between human health and the integrity of ecosystems, but it is not given much consideration in the neoliberal political-economic model. We have not been able, as a global community, to imagine a socioeconomic model that is cyclical, ecological and solidaristic instead of the dominant model based on extraction, production, consumption and discard.

Guidelines from the Perspective of Indigenous Concept of Full Life

The current model is based on a vision that keeps the human being “outside” of creation and with little possibility of interacting with it in a responsible manner. We have lost our place and identity in the Common Home, convinced that we can occupy the position of creator instead of recognizing that we are creatures. Indigenous peoples teach us that all of God’s creation is one network of life that includes us as human being. The Ngäbe, for their part, place us in the “Ju Ngöbökwé,” the house of God, which encompasses all of creation and the cosmos.

During the last decades, the Church has begun to pay attention to indigenous wisdom and practices, especially regarding their relationship with creation. Recent church statements propose an intimate relationship of the human being with all creation, affirming that “as believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings” (Laudato Si’).

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Balance in the Common Home - continued from page 4

The indigenous concept of Full Life teaches the western world that there are alternatives to their supposed concept of “progress” or development. Summarizing the concept of Full Life, Francis states that indigenous people “know how to be content with little; they enjoy God’s little gifts without accumulating great possessions; they do not destroy things needlessly; they care for ecosystems and they recognize that the earth, while serving as a generous source of support for their life, also has a maternal dimension that evokes respect and tender love” (Querida Amazonia, #71).

After several decades of struggle against megaprojects on their lands (mining, dams), the Ngäbe people (in 2012) achieved the enactment of an environmental protection law for their land, which, among other aspects, prohibits mining for any metal. The promises of wealth and supposed “development” did not convince the Ngäbe to allow the massive destruction of their land, which would also result in the destruction of their practices of harmony with Mother Earth, the human family, and God.

Toward Another Possible World

This pandemic reveals the roots of a crisis that is essentially a life crisis. It has forced us to reevaluate what is essential in order to live with dignity. In the midst of the sadness of this crisis, we have witnessed the great capacity of human beings to make sacrifices for the good of others. Although there are examples of selfishness in some settings, many people in various countries have been able to make sacrifices, completely change their way of life and daily activity for the good of others, especially the most vulnerable.

The great task, then, will be to make this spirit of solidarity and willingness to sacrifice for the good of others a permanent reality in order to establish a renewed relationship with Mother Earth. If we want to avoid more pandemics, we have to take our role in the care of the Common Home very seriously and commit ourselves not to return to life as “normal” when this pandemic passes. We can begin this process by affirming that everything is related and interconnected. This can open a new dawn for us in which the integrity of ecosystems are respected because each creature is important in the Creator’s plan.

Hopefully, the crystalline waters of the rivers and the clean air in the cities are not just temporary effects of a health crisis, but become the new standard of coexistence in the sacred dance of ongoing creation, an important moment of change of direction for a humankind that is able to learn from the indigenous peoples that another world is possible.

Editor’s Note: This article is excerpted from the Congregation of the Mission Communications on September 5, 2020

(<https://cmglobal.org/>). To read the full article, click on the link:

https://cmglobal.org/en/2020/09/05/balance-in-the-common-home-post-pandemic-guidelines-from-the-perspective-of-the-indigenous-concept-of-full-life/#utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=balance-in-the-common-home-post-pandemic-guidelines-from-the-perspective-of-the-indigenous-concept-of-full-life

Alabama’s Black Belt

by Kit McGovern, Certified GCCM Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) Animator and Facilitator of Our Mother of Consolation Parish Climate Ministry

My experience as a young child on vacation at my grandparents’ farm in rural South Carolina came to mind when I came across an article, “The Stench of American Neglect” by Caroline Fraser, in the February 25, 2021 issue of *The New York Review of Books*.

When I was very young the only sanitary accommodations at my grandparents’ home were two outhouses, one for the men and one for the women. (I didn’t ask why there were separate facilities.) Sometime during my teen years indoor plumbing was installed. I still remember the sewage being piped from the house to a ditch within sight of the house. Being a city girl, this was all a novelty to me. Not until last month when I read a book review by Caroline Fraser, did I give any more thought to my memories.

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Alabama's Black Belt - continued from page 5

The article is a review of a new book by Catherine Coleman Flowers, *Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret*. I would like to summarize the information presented in the article, which describes conditions like what I experienced over fifty years ago, and tragically still exist in the United States today. I believe that poverty and a lack of regard for the environment contribute to the lack of action to clean up this environmentally hazardous situation.

According to Fraser, the Black Belt accreted during the Cretaceous Period, 145-166 million years ago, when billions of minute marine plants and animals died. This matter drifted to the bottom of the seas at the center of North America in an enormous interior waterway covering what is now Florida, Texas, and the Great Plains and dividing the continent into two truncated landmasses: the West Coast and a chunk of the Midwest. Much of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana were underwater, but when the seas receded, they left behind black soil enriched by mineralized fossil sediments. Thus the Black Belt.

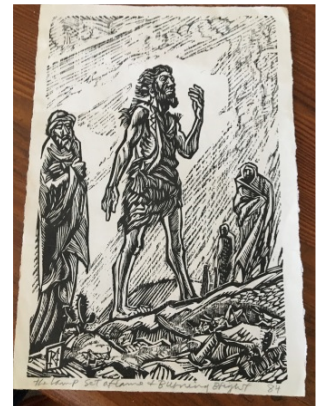
In the first half of the twentieth century the Black Belt was populated mainly by poor white sharecropping families, as documented in the 1941 book by James Agee and photographer Walker Evans *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Evan's photos showed adults clothed mainly in repurposed feed sack apparel, the children were half naked. Agee reported that "the skin on the legs and feet of the adults were stained with manure with odors to match." Photos of the living quarters showed rag-stuffed broken windows, vermin ridden bedding, and outhouses outfitted with "toilet paper" consisting of newspaper and catalog scraps, twigs, and leaves.

In her book, Flowers refers to Booker T. Washington's 1901 autobiography, *Up From Slavery*. Washington wrote: "Later and especially since the war, the term ("Black Belt") seems to be used wholly in a political sense - that is, to designate the counties where the black people outnumber the white."

Catherine Coleman Flowers grew up in Lowndes County in a concrete block house. She was born in 1958 and remembers using an outhouse and a slop jar. In her book, Coleman Flowers examines the "dirty secret: of racial, economic and environmental injustice." She "chronicles the lives of friends and neighbors coping with criminally deficient housing and a lack of sanitation so horrific that raw sewage bubbles up in sinks and toilets and floods the floors of run-down collapsing trailers, and lies reeking in backyards and lagoons."

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Catherine Coleman Flowers
stands over a pool of raw
sewage outside a home in
White Hall, Alabama.



Prophet by Robert McGovern

In 2000, Flowers returned to Lowndes County. She reported that she saw many Black families living in dilapidated trailers with no septic systems, their sewage straight-piped to backyards, where children's toys lay mixed with gobs of toilet paper in pools of raw sewage. Residents of Lowndes County, Alabama are still living without proper sanitation or septic systems. They are living with third world issues like hookworm, e-coli, and asthma. They are living lives of septic poverty.

Coleman Flowers began urging officials to treat sewage as a public health issue. She went to international conferences to argue that "inadequate sewage treatment contaminates water sources and encourages the proliferation of tropical diseases." Within the past ten years she founded an organization titled *Center for Rural Enterprise and Environmental Justice* to encourage governments to recognize their responsibility to maintain infrastructure and provide essential services to urban and rural poor.

In *Waste: One Woman's Fight Against American's Dirty Secret*, Fraser summarizes "Catherine Coleman Flowers offers her readers a plate of excrement that has been served to the poor all their lives."

My Name Means Joy from page 1

by Sr. Dr. Jocelyn Edathil SIC, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine and Co-Chief Patient Experience officer of Temple University Health System. She is also a member of the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ, an Eastern Rite Catholic community.

Sister Jocelyn first presented this essay at a Temple Health narrative medicine event where the theme was "Why I love medicine." My name means Joy. After many years, I finally found out the true meaning of my name. In fact, I grew into this name. Now, I am known by my "style"—It's my smile! But what happens when Joy loses her smile? This year has been a challenge for so many and at times I was on the brink of losing my identity. In fact, my identity is often the juxtaposition between two distinct titles. I live in the world of the "slash." I am: MD / PhD Sr. / Dr. And, due to the pandemic, my patients this year walked a fine line between Alive / Dead.

I went into medicine as so many did "to help people." Unlike many others in this profession, it was not until my last few years into medical school and early into residency that I truly fell in love with medicine. I love the diagnostics. I feel like I am a detective! I have diagnosed difficult diagnoses such as ALS and possibly porphyria. I love the connections with people.

Recently, I have been reminiscing of that joyful day when the Philadelphia streets were green with Eagles paraphernalia during the Eagles parade. We were shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Philadelphians and crowded into the streets and subways, rejoicing! Now there is an invisible line of social distancing.

During the height of COVID, I could no longer "touch" patients without some fear. It was the thin line of the face shield, which both allowed me to see my patients and at the same time separated us. In fact, I went into the early times of the pandemic thinking I was like a St Joan of Arc who would heroically and valiantly (and maybe naively) go into battle with the virus! I did my Ph.D. in antiviral drug design! I had the joy of discovery! MD meets PhD! And as the weeks turned into months and I lost family members and patients, the joy began to seep out of me and I began to look like my ID card – which by the way I placed in the washer and dryer and now looks like a sad mangled piece of plastic- and still works (after a lot of adjusting). A thin plastic line that opens doors. When Joy loses her joy, what can help? Connection.

I had a young female patient with severe coronary artery disease who was going to have a left heart catheterization in the morning. I ran down to see her before she was being wheeled into the cath lab and I waved hi to her. We had chatted for a while the day before about how she had overcome so much in her life and so much illness. She was so positive. Then, that night, I got a call "Your patient...I'm sorry... she coded."

My heart sank. I don't know if it is because I saw myself in her. Her skin was dark and so is mine. I identified with her. "Is she alive?" I asked. "Well, they got her back. But she was down for fifteen minutes." Fifteen minutes is an eternity in a code. I was at home when I got the call. Suddenly, my slash started working. I am Sister/Doctor. As I went through my social rounds of calls, I would gently share that my patient was very sick. Please pray, I softly mentioned. After all, in my 11 years as an M.D., I have seen so many codes. I knew... hope was thin. Joy was thinning out. Not sure why that patient stood out. Maybe my identity as a healer had been tarnished by COVID. Maybe my heart couldn't take another death. Maybe I was...like so many families...looking for a miracle. The next day, I found out that she survived the night. Days passed. Finally, I saw that she was out of the ICU. Did she have anoxic brain injury? How was she, I hoped, I prayed, and I went to see her..."Hi doc! How are you?" I was shocked. She survived and was able to speak! My gift of healing was shocked back into practice.

This truly comforted me. We live in a world of odds and predictions; but for me, this patient was my N=1. This is where Sr. met Dr. She walked on the slash between Alive/Dead. She gave me back my JOY.

Now underneath my face shield and mask, I got my style back. I got my smile back. My eyes dance behind my PPE. Behind many slashes and titles, I am still a joyful healer.

Mary T. Hansbury Ph.D.

We are sorry to hear about the passing of Catholic Peace Fellowship member, Mary Hansbury, Ph.D., who died in her Chestnut Hill home on March 2, 2021. Mary was a frequent contributor to the Catholic Peace Fellowship of Philadelphia newsletter. In our last issue, in her article titled, "Healing and the Environment," she wrote of St. Ephrem of the Syriac fathers, and proposed the Syriac view of Jesus as One who heals. Mary was a scholar of Early Christian Studies in World Religions, a renowned translator, and world traveler.

Mary's funeral mass was live streamed and available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tZ5sYvs1bl&t=4399s>

A full obituary is available at

https://www.jacobfruth.com/obituary/mary-hansbury?fh_id=15520

Link to newsletters

<http://www.cpfphila.com/Newsletters.html>

Throwing Stones at God's Door

by Barbara Sheehan

At the recent retreat on "Finding Hope in Turbulent Times," peace activist and psychiatric nurse Sarah Ball spoke about the need to express our feelings of anger and despair. She shared how appreciating great art helps. For example, she admires the work of Fyodor Dostoevsky, a man of great faith who often wrote about failure and suffering. She said that we should all feel comfortable with feeling forsaken from time to time, because Jesus also felt forsaken.

Ball shared the words of a priest she knows in Silver Springs, MD, who said "we should all throw stones at God's door when we feel that we need to. We should be angry and frustrated and express this... but we shouldn't stay there."

Her words helped me to reflect on an incident that occurred in my parish in the September of this past year. At the time, I was moved to write the following poem while sitting outside the shattered windows of the church.



Postscript for the poem Rock Thrower: Police found a young man in a neighbor's yard that night taking off his clothes in their gazebo. He was carrying a bag with the parish's logo on it and filling it with garden tools. The neighbor, a retired parole officer, recognized a person with mental health and/or drug abuse issues, and requested that he be taken for treatment.

Link to "Finding Hope in Turbulent Times" on www.CPFphila.com

Rock Thrower

Stained glass windows picture the Nativity,
surrounded by stone crafted in an obelisk shape--
the targets of a rock thrower on Wednesday night.

Three windows penetrated.

The Higher window of the three
has a web-like crack surrounding a hole with irregular
edges,
like a malignant skin tag.

The Middle window contains the darkest glass
and the cut is much cleaner;
it follows the leaden borders of the glassmaker's design,
but a smaller one hovers above it,
like a thought bubble.

In the Bottom window, the hole is an oval
a womb that isn't bounded by leaden designs.
and still, the edges are well defined,
a clean break.

So the rock thrower has a good strong arm
And a sharp eye.

The target was hit with impressive accuracy,
only three rocks were found.

Before or after the windows were pierced
rectory chairs and pillows on the porch were "tossed."
Canned goods meant for the pantry were thrown asunder
as if a violent storm hit without warning.

Our nights are restless and fitful, filled with
unwelcomed thoughts about health, finances, and futures
and a pandemic that just --won't --end.

While this troubled soul sounded another alarm,
the clerics were unaware,
only discovering the shattered signals from the rock
thrower
upon arising in the morning to prepare the church for
mass.

The pastor:
Pray for this individual.
We are insured.
Police were called.
No one was hurt.

The rock thrower's message?
I wonder.

Barbara Sheehan,
March 2021

The Military & the Environment

by Sr Maryanne Zakreski, SSJ - continued from page 1

We need a moral and spiritual compass for the journey to create a more caring, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable world. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the encyclical, Pope Francis announced a Special 'Laudato Si' Anniversary Year from 24th May 2020 – 24th May 2021.

To order to create an ever healthier world, one that is more caring, inclusive and peaceful, we seek to develop our understanding of sustainability as well as examine those impacts that endanger life on our planet. A landmark report, The Brundtland Report of 1987, defines sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

As we celebrate "Care for Our Common Home" in its various dimensions and interconnections, we consider the military dimension that our country has had little comment on. Excerpts from the two articles below will expand our consciousness and raise an urgent need for concern. One reason that countries defend their military expansion is the concern for security. I submit, as many others do, that this is a false security. Military security is one dimensional and fails to consider the many aspects that true security and sustainability entails. Our own country treats the military as an unspoken god that folks feel is too sacred to approach, that is, except our current heroes, the peace activists who are currently incarcerated.

In the article, "The Military's Impact On The Environment: A Neglected Aspect Of The Sustainable Development Debate" published in 2002, the author argues that each nation's quest for security must move beyond the traditional understanding of dependency on the military for security. Real security requires a holistic, cooperative approach that addresses all the inter-linked threats to humanity.

This includes the threats that "military security" has created. "Human security" starts with the recognition that all human beings are linked in inter-dependence with each other and with the natural environment. It draws upon our increasing understanding of the global environment -- the web of life in nature, and upon principles of good governance including transparency, accountability, human rights, and civic participation. International standard-setting and cooperative principles are necessary to guide sustainable development on Earth.

There are several reasons that the U.S. military's impact on the environment has not received necessary the attention it deserves. One is that the military is not seen as an "industry," even though in many ways it behaves like one. Another is that the state operates by a double standard in which they are not willing to subject their armed forces to the levels of transparency and accountability that are required of other governmental or civil society actors.

Yet, it is important that we realize that military activity affects our environment in multiple ways through the immediate and long-term effects of armed conflict, in nuclear weapons development, and arms production, which pollutes in countless ways the air, land, and water.

Long-term effects of past global military activities include:

- The world's military forces are responsible for the release of more than two thirds of CFC-113, that is very unreactive chlorofluorocarbon, that stays in the ozone layer for long periods of time.
- During the Cold War, the U.S. and Soviet armed forces produced enormous amounts of hazardous wastes.
- As a result of naval accidents, there are at least 50 nuclear warheads and 11 nuclear reactors littering the ocean floor; there are more nuclear reactors at sea than on land.

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Abandoned Air Force Base in Greenland.
Photo by Ken Bower for EcoWatch, Environmental
News for a Healthier Planet.

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The Military & the Environment - continued from page 9

- The Pentagon has generated five times more toxins than the next five major U.S. chemical companies combined. The cost of the clean-up of military-related sites is estimated to be upwards of \$500 billion.
- Radiation from nuclear explosions (e.g. Hiroshima, Nagasaki) as well as past nuclear testing in Nevada and the Marshall Islands
- Agricultural degradation due to landmines (many African and Asian countries)
- Unexploded "remnants of war" impede agriculture, (e.g. cluster bombs in Kosovo and Afghanistan)
- Chemical agents and burning of oil wells (Gulf War)

A list of the more severe environmental impacts include:

- Scorched-earth tactics. A popular military practice down the ages for retreating armies to lay waste to enemy territory.
- Use of "Agent Orange" and other U.S. defoliants during the Vietnam War which rendered about a third of Vietnam a wasteland. The Vietnamese farming landscape is defaced by 2.5 million craters. In all the wars between 1945 and 1982, Vietnam lost over 80% of its original forest cover.
- The Gulf War also had major ecological consequences. This includes approximately four to eight million barrels of oil spilled into the sea. Approximately 460 miles of coastline have suffered massive damage due to oil spills and burning wells. The U.S. coalition forces left huge quantities of refuse and toxic materials including 45 - 54 million gallons of sewage in sand pits.

During this time, when the world is focused on the global environmental crisis, we need to realize the terrible environmental impact of military activities, not only in our country but globally as well. In 2014, the former head of the Pentagon's environmental program told Newsweek that her office has to contend with 39,000 contaminated areas spread across 19 million acres just in the U.S. alone including 900 of the nearly 1,200 Superfund sites in the U.S.

Our real security lies in creating sustainable life in all of its forms respecting all the intricacies of Earth's web of life. By incorporating the use of human resources in all its varied dimensions, plans can be made to heal and sustain our Earth now and into the future.

Resources for this article:

- "The Military's Impact On The Environment: A Neglected Aspect Of The Sustainable Development Debate," A Briefing Paper for States and Non-Governmental Organizations, International Peace Bureau, Geneva, August 2002.
- "U.S. Military Is World's Biggest Polluter" MintPress News, May. 15, 2017, by Whitney Weber.

Israelizing the American Police, Palestinianizing the American People

Part One by Jeff Harper

This article is reprinted from the December 2020 issue of "The Link," published by Americans for Middle East Understanding, Jeff Harper, an American born anthropologist living in Israel, is the former Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and a co-founder of "The People Yes Network." In 2006 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Israel's mythical reputation as the world's premier anti-terrorist power lends it great clout in Congress, in the Pentagon, in homeland security circles, and among the police. Israel's para-military police fit well with para-military tendencies already present in American police departments. By the mid-1960s, Philadelphia and LA established SWAT teams—SWAT meaning originally "Special Weapons Attack Team," hardly a civilian concept. This begins what Radley Balko calls "the rise of the warrior cop" in his book by the same name. Today 80% of police forces have SWAT teams.

Cathy Lanier, a former Chief of the Washington DC police, claimed "No experience in my life has had more of an impact on doing my job than going to Israel." During her tenure she authorized checkpoints in the troubled northeast DC neighborhood of Trinidad to monitor and control street violence and the illegal narcotics trade.

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In 2002, soon after 9/11, the American Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs [JINSA], an organization that holds there is no difference between the national security interests of the U.S and Israel, inaugurated its Law Enforcement Exchange Program [LEEP].

Partnering with the Israel National Police, the Israel Ministry of Internal Security, and the Israel Security Agency [Shin Bet], JINSA won the support of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major County Sheriff's Association, Major City Chiefs Association, and the Police Executive Research Forum, for a program to bring to Israel police chiefs, sheriffs, senior law enforcement executives, state homeland security directors, state police commissioners, and federal law enforcement leadership for "education." Over 9,500 law enforcement officers have participated in twelve conferences thus far. "The knowledge gleaned from observation and training during the [LEEP] trip," effused Colonel Joseph Fuentes, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, on the JINSA website, "prompted significant changes to the organizational structure of the New Jersey Police."

At the same time, the Anti-Defamation League [ADL] began hosting an Advanced Training School twice a year in Washington, DC. Its "School" has trained more than 1,000 U.S. law enforcement professionals, representing 245 federal, state, and local agencies. The ADL also runs a National Counter-Terrorism Seminar [NCTS] in Israel, bringing law enforcement officers from across the U.S. to Israel for a week of intensive counter-terrorism training, as well as connecting American law enforcement officials with the Israel National Police, the IDF, and Israel's intelligence and security services.

In light of the killing of George Floyd, it should be noted that in 2012 the Israeli consulate in Chicago held a training for 100 officers of the Minneapolis Police Department in Minneapolis.

When we think of the control exerted on populations through the police forces of neoliberal Security States, the use of "violence" is not the issue in Israel-U.S. police training. Police violence is intimidating, but Israel has not trained U.S. police to be more violent. They were violent and repressive a century or more before Israel was ever established. Interestingly enough, the inter-personal violence so characteristic of American police in conflict situations is lacking in Israel. Israeli police rarely handcuff people or pull their weapons, the first instinct of American cops. The "violence" in Israel policing is more controlled, as it is in combat. It is less a macho kind of violence. Israeli police do not move as suddenly from detaining to shooting as do the Americans. Rather, they react only through control of the situation. Israel lacks the niceties of reading to suspects their rights before engaging with them, as we saw preceding the Atlanta shooting of Rayshard Brooks. Prior to engaging, however, Israeli police isolate and lock-down the site of the attack, issue alerts to those in the immediate vicinity and then, if necessary, aggressively deal with the perpetrators.

Once the attack has been launched, the American-Israeli use of arms is reversed. Whereby American police are constrained in their violent reactions by law, regulations, and public opinion [and therefore many are required to wear body cameras], the Israeli police consider the safety of the first responder primary, and so allow – require – a disproportionate use of force. Their response is a military one, and police units are generally backed up by paramilitary SWAT-type units as well as the army – the integrated response Israel urges on American police. Paramilitary units are authorized to fire live ammunition into Palestinian crowds, a common [and fatal] practice that goes well beyond the bounds of the American police. Israeli police response prescribes: Strike Fast and it involves confrontational "shoot to-kill" (aiming at the head so as not to set off explosives) tactics.

An officer of the Memphis Police Department who received Israeli Combative Pistol Training, explained that while American ideals on the use of force revolve around using the least amount of force in a conservative, defensive manner, the Israeli method is opposite this ideal. Their intent is to bring the maximum amount of force into play in an offensive manner, to attack the attacker, to be more aggressive than the aggressor, to explode and overwhelm the initial aggressor with violence of action. The intent is to shoot until there is no longer a threat.

John Elliot, an American security officer, in an article for the website Guns.com says "When it comes to shooting, the major difference between Israel and American training is our philosophy on close-quarter or urban combat. The biggest difference between what the Israelis did and what we Americans were trained to do was that they would often times suggest going almost headlong at an enemy position while firing through whole magazines."

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