

THE NEWPEOPLE

PITTSBURGH'S PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWSPAPER OF THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER



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2019 THOMAS MERTON AWARD - BUILDING NEW TRADITIONS

BY SYMONE SAUL



KEEANGA-YAMAHTTA TAYLOR
PHOTO BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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As a follow-up to the article on 2019 Thomas Merton Awardee, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, in the October issue of NewPeople, this issue also provides an in-depth review of her first book in the article titled, "It's the System, Merton Awardee Argues."

The Thomas Merton Center board, staff, and Award Event planning committee members have made a concerted effort to shape this year's event through the lens of equity and sustainability beginning with the selection of this year's Thomas Merton Award recipient and the event site, caterer, speakers and performers. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's dedication to providing straightforward, factual evidence of the myriad ways that institutionalized racism is continuously profitable for white people provides a great opportunity for the Thomas Merton Center to uphold our values of justice in beginning to alleviate this inequity.

As if enslavement weren't enough, the Black community has continually been expected to bear the burden of their own liberation as well. In *Jacobin Magazine*, Keeanga discusses the debate over how the Black Lives

PITTSBURGHERS MARCH TO END TO U.S. MILITARISM, REPRESSION AND CLIMATE DESTRUCTION

BY CRAIG STEVENS

On a sunny fall day, October 5, over 200 people from the Pittsburgh area gathered in Schenley Plaza, Oakland, for the 3rd annual Pittsburgh March for Peace, sponsored by a cross-section of local peace, social and economic justice and environmental groups (list below). The march organizers called for an end to all U.S. wars, a 50% reduction of the U.S. military budget with reinvestment in social and infrastructure programs, and an end to the militarization of domestic law enforcement agencies.

Mike Stout, the region's troubadour for progressive movements and member of the Izaak Walton League, set the mood for the march with several songs on war, injustice and the climate crisis, including "Not In Our Name!" Helen Gerhardt, Iraq war veteran, human rights and food justice organizer, served as moderator.

Safdar Khwaja, President of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Pittsburgh chapter, opened the event decrying the massive U.S. military budget and widening economic gap that are bankrupting and undermining our society and democratic values. He urged us to work to "awaken the consciousness of all who are supporting this military juggernaut" and to make our government be "of the people, for the people and by the people".

Helen Gerhardt spoke of witnessing senseless death and destruction in Iraq as a veteran of the U.S. invasion and the continuing price Iraqis and our veterans are paying to this day. Before beginning the March, Gerhardt called for a moment of silence for "all those who have laid their lives on the line for peace - and the victims of violence."

Marchers wound their way through Oakland from the University of Pittsburgh up to Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) carrying colorful signs, lifted by the music of the MayDay Marching Band and chants for peace and justice led by Krystle Knight, Thomas Merton Center organizer, and Briann Moye, Climate and Environmental Justice organizer.

The march made several stops at key points on the route, stopping first on Fifth Avenue at CMU's Software Engineering Institute (SEI), known for creating high-tech electronic war systems for the Pentagon. There, Michael Madaio, a CMU graduate student and member of Tech for Society, spoke about the university's role in providing the Pittsburgh Police Department, since 2016, with "predictive policing" technology which has resulted in compounding existing racial biases in policing where it has been used in other cities. Madaio said a

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COUNTY CIVILIAN POLICE REVIEW BOARD BILL THE FINAL CASUALTY OF A PGH DEADLY SUMMER

BY CHERYL BAUER
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



LOUIS BERRY III SPEAKING TO THE PRESS AUGUST 27, 2019 AFTER VOTE

First, Onaje Dickinson, a 20-year-old from Pittsburgh simply wanted for questioning by Penn Hills officers investigating a homicide, was shot on July 14th after failing to comply with an officer's demands.

Then on July 23, an officer from the state Attorney General's office shot and killed 31-year-old Omari Ali Thompson in Ross Township during a buy/bust operation in a shopping center parking lot.

Eleven days later in South Park, Joshua Dewayne Burton was shot by a Monongahela police officer following a car chase and physical altercation. Burton is stable, remains in custody, and will face charges; the Allegheny County District Attorney will determine whether the officer who shot him was acting within the law when he did so.

Finally, Don Babbitt, a 49 year-old Shaler resident and teacher at Penn Hills High School, was killed on August

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The NewPeople distributes over 2,200 copies each month to diverse people, organizations, businesses, and groups.

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Pittsburghers March to End to U.S. Militarism, Repression and Climate Destruction

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TMC supports these organizations' missions.

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2019 THOMAS MERTON AWARD - BUILDING NEW TRADITIONS

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Matter movement would shift into policy-making, not just grassroots activism. This also begs the question of how those already making policy will prioritize the needs of Communities of Color.

In her micro- and macro-level analyses, Keeanga puts the cards out on the table for white people and the institutions in which they function, and every move in response must be decidedly pro-black to even pretend to be shifting the scale towards an end to racism.

Thus, an institution that inherently invokes progress such as the Thomas Merton Center has an overt responsibility to recognize how to do better, not just in the mission but in its behavior and actions on every level. Living the values of peace and justice means prioritizing the advancement of marginalized communities at every turn. This year, the TMC equity committee has focused on investigating the systemic inequities within the organization and moving towards progressing that investigation in tangible and actionable ways. Even an annual event like the Thomas Merton Award, which could easily be another cookie-cutter non-profit fundraiser, has been recreated and reassessed by the Special Events Committee through the lens of equity and sustainability. The humble desire is to create a safe space for the entire community of members and newcomers to properly honor a revered scholar and be accountable to the subject matter.

Certainly, no one would claim that a fundraiser which benefits the TMC is the place for some transcendent impact on the Black community. Nonetheless, under white supremacy, certainly every space provides an opportunity to choose whether to perpetuate it. Being mindful of the TMC's role in that system is at the forefront of planning this award.

Award Reception Plans

Guests will have the opportunity to explore the inspiring galleries of the August Wilson African-American Cultural Center from 5 to 8pm. At 7:30pm, guests will be welcomed into the theater where, in addition to the esteemed awardee, carefully-chosen speakers and performers will present challenging opportunities to look at systemic violence specifically against Black urban communities.

The caterer for the event, Chef Claudy Pierre, of Eminent Hospitality Solutions and Arnold's Tea, likely knows personally how Keeanga's investigations into racialized profiteering play out for Black business-owners. Recently, the landlords of Arnold's Tea tried evicting the small business due to increasing market rates in its rapidly-gentrifying area of the North Side, despite (or perhaps because of) the location being a beacon for the Black organizer and activist community.

Pierre's commitment to community development is a huge reason Eminent Hospitality was chosen to cater the reception, a choice seconded only by their unique, hold-your-heart-and-swoon hors d'oeuvres. Chef Claudy also started the Empowerment Awareness & Training (E.A.T.) Initiative Inc., a nonprofit organization that tries to combat food insecurity, and hosts hands-on cooking demonstrations and career development training for those interested in working for the hospitality industry.

Don't miss the best party in Pittsburgh honoring national and international activists!

2019 Thomas Merton Award
Friday, November 22, 2019 from
5-10pm
(Galleries open 5-8pm, program from
7:30-9pm)

August Wilson African-American Cultural Center is at 980 Liberty Ave, Downtown Pittsburgh, PA 15222

To purchase tickets, sponsorship or program book ads, visit
[**ThomasMertonCenter.org/tma2019**](http://ThomasMertonCenter.org/tma2019)

Visit Thomas Merton Center's FB page for more info.

Child-friendly, cash bar, heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served. As always, leave hateful and oppressive behavior at home!

The desire to uplift and empower these worthy businesses is also why the Thomas Merton Award is offering reduced-price advertising to Black-owned small businesses. In the throes of capitalism, we will always fall short of liberation, but this is the least and most immediate form of gratitude to those brave individuals willing to rise up to the challenge of maintaining a business in an economy which relies on their exploitation.

Thomas Merton Center members have always diligently reached out to their networks to donate towards scholarships for this annual event, and this year wish to specifically extend those scholarships to local activists and organizers of color who push the scales on the very issues that Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor works on at a national scale. Anyone who finds themselves in a position of privilege and responsibility is strongly encouraged to sponsor this cause.

It is not enough to give awards or microphones to those confronting racism in America. It is not enough to listen respectfully while acting complacently. White people must actively find ways to counteract the virus of white supremacy in their daily lives and organizational structures. While the Thomas Merton Center and its members will undoubtedly make many mistakes along the way, they hope to inspire others to take risks incorporating justice work into every facet of their lives.

In addition to supporting Black artists, performers, business owners, community leaders and academics, there is a concerted effort being made by the Event Committee to create sustainable events with a strong attention to accessibility details. The Facebook event page has further information towards these ends and recommendations and requests are welcome.

Creating a practical model of practicing what is preached in an introspective and inclusive way is at the core of the Thomas Merton Center's year-round efforts. All are expressly invited to kick back, party, build community and build new traditions!

Symone Saul serves on the Special Events Committee for the Thomas Merton Award

TMC HOSTS AUTHOR SUZANNE WEISS

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

All are invited to participate in a potluck supper followed by a presentation and discussion with Suzanne Weiss, author of the just published memoir *Holocaust to Resistance, My Journey* on Thursday, Nov. 14 from 6:30 – 9 PM at the Thomas Merton Center.

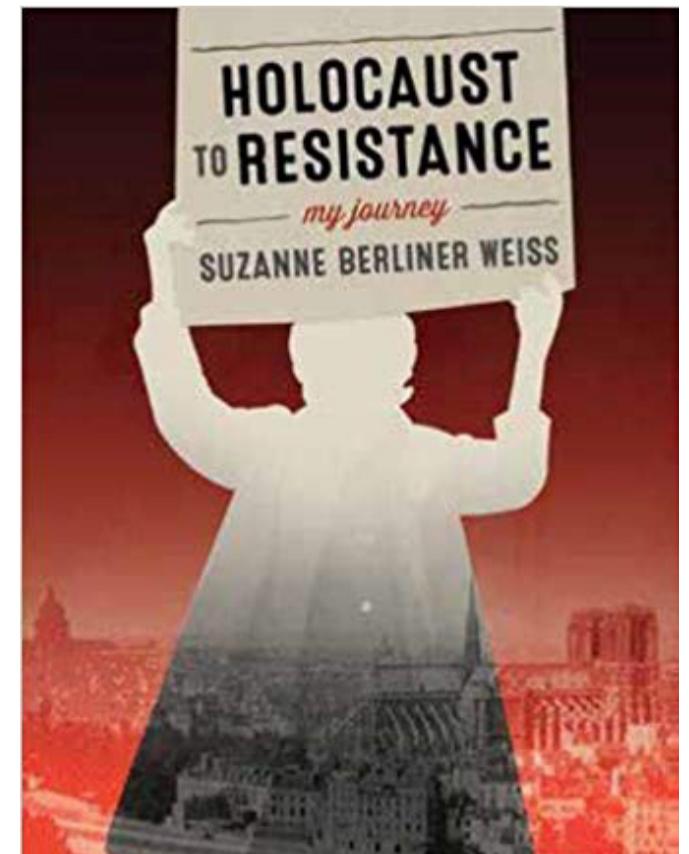
The book is a powerful and awe-inspiring memoir from activist Suzanne Berliner Weiss. She was born to Jewish parents in Paris in 1941. During World War II she was hidden from the Nazis on a farm in rural France. Finding herself alone after the war, Suzanne lived in orphanages, where she gained a belief in peace and brotherhood. She was adopted by a New York family and found herself with a tumultuous youth plagued by domestic conflict, fears of nuclear war and anti-communist repression, a period in a detention home and then re-linking with her roots in Europe.

Beginning at age seventeen, Suzanne became a lifelong social activist, engaged in student radicalization, the Cuban Revolution, and movements for Black Power, women's liberation, peace in Vietnam and freedom for Palestine. Now in her late seventies, Suzanne shares how the ties of

friendship, solidarity and resistance that saved her as a child speak to the issues of our world today.

Paul LeBlanc, professor at La Roche University and Merton Center member, who is hosting Suzanne's visit to Pittsburgh, offers these thoughts on her book: "Holocaust to Resistance offers a very rich slice of social history, providing a down-to-earth, very personal narrative extending from the Second World War into the Age of Trump: the life-journey of a Holocaust survivor whose entire life became a resistance against the deep-seated structures of inhumanity."

Joyce Rothermel serves on the Membership Committee of the Thomas Merton Center



CALING OUT INJUSTICE

THE DEATH PENALTY GRINDS ON IN PENNSYLVANIA

BY MARTHA R CONLEY

In response to the Applications for Extraordinary Relief filed by death row inmates Jermont Cox and Kevin Marinelli, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania decided on September 26, 2019 to uphold the constitutionality of the death penalty, leaving in place a state-sanctioned "machinery of death", fueled by the minorities and most vulnerable among us.

Cox and Marinelli challenged the constitutionality of Pennsylvania's death penalty based on a high error rate in death penalty cases, a vast number of which are overturned, due to PA's failure to provide indigent defense, citing trends of geography, race, mental illness, and poverty as factors determining who is convicted and sentenced to death, and the failure of current practice to serve in a measurable capacity as a deterrent or retribution in PA communities. A 2018 report by the Advisory Committee on Capital Punishment in Pennsylvania detailed myriad problems in the way the death penalty is administered in Pennsylvania.

Of course, these problems have been well-documented as early as 1989, notably by the PA Supreme Court itself in 2000, as well as The American Bar Association, The Baldus Study, and the Spangenberg Group. A friend on death row says all these studies are good for spilling up to use as a chair in his cell. Very few of the numerous recommendations made to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and legislature have been implemented over the years.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro opposed the judicial remedy and stated that the question of whether the death penalty should be abolished should be left to the Pennsylvania Legislature. The brief for the Commonwealth acknowledged that problems with the application of the death penalty "are important and should be thoroughly considered and Resolved."

The Pennsylvania Legislature has repeatedly been made aware of these problems and yet has done nothing to resolve them in almost forty years. In

fact, the legislature has increased the number of qualifying aggravating factors from 15 to 18, thus expanding eligibility for the death penalty. This move quietly removed the requirement for proportionality from capital cases, originally designed to ensure that the death penalty was imposed in proportion to the crime committed. In spite of the fact that the Pennsylvania judiciary has known about the infamous training video of then-ADA Jack Mc Mahon (Philadelphia) instructing assistant district attorneys how to eliminate blacks from juries, and despite the precedent in the Batson case which mandates such a remedy, just one case in which ADA McMahon was the district attorney has succeeded in getting a new trial. Only the federal judiciary has been willing to grant relief pursuant to the Batson case.

The Pennsylvania judiciary has proven that they are willing to have all white or virtually all white juries decide the fate of blacks facing the death penalty and that the Commonwealth is really not interested in equal justice under law. In fact, thirteen Republican state senators intervened in the suit, telling the Supreme Court that the study was "advisory only." According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, they suggested that "if such legislative reports become evidence for appeals by litigants, legislators would stop issuing them." Since the recommendations seem to go nowhere anyway, that seems a rather hollow threat. The money spent on study after study would be better spent on implementing the suggested changes.

When you consider there were a little over 300 people on death row nationwide in 1972 when the U.S. Supreme Court threw out the death penalty and 2673 people on death row today, there certainly seems to be an air of intentionality to the practice. Since they're unwilling to fix the system, they should abolish the death penalty before more innocent people languish on death row for no reason other than that their lives don't matter in this Commonwealth.

In 2000, only three states offered no state funding for indigent defense: Utah, South Dakota and Pennsylvania. Today Pennsylvania stands alone, with disastrous results for people charged with capital murder. Perhaps that explains the statistic noted by Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner: since the death penalty was reinstated in Pennsylvania, 72% of death sentences in Philadelphia have been overturned and 82% of current death row inmates from Philadelphia are black. These statistics are chilling evidence of poor legal representation and extreme racial bias in capital cases in PA, a state where blacks make up only 11% of the population.

People who oppose the abolition of the death penalty are likely unfamiliar with how the system has been designed and manipulated. The common and simple assumption is that everybody on death row is guilty, that no one is actually innocent, that blacks aren't targeted for the death penalty. The police never lie, prosecutors don't withhold exculpatory evidence or elicit false testimony from fellow incarcerated folks in exchange for lighter sentences, or use peremptory challenges to exclude blacks from juries. Most would assume that people on trial for their lives are given all the resources they need to hire investigators and expert witnesses to bolster their cases. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The victims of violent crime in Pennsylvania aren't served by what is demonstrably a haphazard system of scapegoating minorities and underprivileged. They are served by a system that devotes the needed resources to insure that the person who is actually guilty is convicted. That goal will never be reached under the Pennsylvania criminal justice system as it exists today. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court and Legislature should stop passing the buck back and forth and end the death penalty now.

Martha R. Conley is a contributing writer to the NewPeople newspaper.

PITTSBURGHERS MARCH TO END TO U.S. MILITARISM, REPRESSION AND CLIMATE DESTRUCTION

FROM PAGE 1

group of CMU graduate students and faculty are working with local advocates to call for a public auditing of this program in Pittsburgh and invited interested people to get involved by emailing: nopredpolpgh@riseup.net.

The march continued on to the PNC Bank branch on Craig Street, where Molly Rush spoke about the Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign's work to stop PNC from investing in nuclear weapons development. Briann Moye followed by urging that PNC stop investing in the Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline damaging West Virginia's mountain region. Noting that the military is the largest user of fossil fuels and producer of CO2 emissions in the world, Moye said that cutting the military budget in half could pay for the Green New Deal while greatly impacting the climate crisis.

Nate Ferrer, with Veterans for Peace Western Pennsylvania, spoke outside CMU's Navy ROTC training building on Forbes Avenue. Ferrer said he completed training there before serving in the Navy, which he did to get money for college and "live the lie of being a hero," before realizing that only U.S. military contractors and higher-up officers and officials benefit from war.

The march continued on to the CMU campus. There, Tracy Baton, an organizer for the Women's March in Pittsburgh, spoke about growing up with the poster "War is Not Safe for Children and Other Living Things" and keeping that truth in front of us.

Laura Peterson, Emergency Response Coordinator for Casa San Jose, spoke about how U.S. military intervention

in support of dictators in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras created the conditions that are forcing thousands of Central Americans to flee for their safety and seek asylum in the U.S., only to be denied entry and the right to seek asylum at the militarized border. This repression is felt here in Pittsburgh, Peterson said, where



MOLLY RUSH, CO-FOUNDER OF THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER, ADDRESSES THE MARCHERS WHILE KRYSTLE KNIGHT, THE CENTER'S COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, LOOKS ON. PHOTO BY NEIL COSGROVE.

as many as 30 people a week are being detained by ICE and facing deportation.

The final speaker, Brian Rhindress, a CMU graduate student said that, just that week, CMU Students Against ICE Coalition "joined a national movement of students standing up to say they will not apply for or interview with Palantir - a big data company that created two key tools for ICE to help execute family separation policies and raids on immigrant communities." Rhindress said the coalition involved 200 students, staff and faculty in protests of the recruitment event. To get involved, he said to contact: cmuagainstice@gmail.com

Organizers closed the march urging participants to keep waging peace and justice and to get involved with the sponsoring groups:

The Thomas Merton Center, Anti-War Committee of Pittsburgh, Council on American Islamic Relations (PGH), Extinction Rebellion (PGH), Casa San Jose, Black Political Empowerment Project, St. James Church Peace and Social Justice Committee, Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence, The Allegheny County Democratic Black Caucus, Green Party of Allegheny County, Industrial Workers of the World (PGH), 350 Pittsburgh, Veterans for Peace of Western PA, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Craig Stevens is a TMC member and volunteer and recently became a proud grandfather.

AN UNDENIABLE HISTORY

IT'S THE SYSTEM, MERTON AWARDEE ARGUES

BY NEIL COSGROVE

White Americans are so wedded to the notion that their economic and political systems are superior to all others, and to the "mythology" of "freedom, democracy, and endless opportunity," that they will perform endless, and endlessly inventive, mental somersaults to keep disillusionment at bay.

That is one takeaway from Thomas Merton awardee Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's first book, *From #Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*, published in 2016, in the last year of Barack Obama's presidency.

At times, Taylor further argues, it is only disorder in the streets, public and sometimes destructive manifestations of anger and frustration, that can break through Americans' willful dismissal of historical fact and current reality. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society was a direct response to the widespread eruptions in urban ghettos during the mid- to late '60s, rather than to the non-violent movement for desegregation that came before those eruptions.

Taylor regards the confrontations between protestors and police and the National Guard following Michael Brown's killing in Ferguson, MO, and the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement inspired by those protests, as a return to the direct action and systemic critique that was brutally repressed fifty years ago.

Taking care to provide a slew of evidence demonstrating the racial divides in employment, education, incarceration, housing, and household wealth that persist in this country, Taylor aims to debunk the claims that such problems are best addressed by emphasizing "personal responsibility" and a so-called "culture of poverty." She excoriates the Black politicians, including Obama, who have employed those tropes, and rues the abandonment of direct action, in sole favor of electoral politics, that evolved during the 1970s.

In similar fashion, Taylor documents the wide racial disparities in school suspensions, arrests, imprisonments, and police violence here in the U.S. In 2018 Pittsburgh it took no great insight to distinguish between an unarmed black teenager gunned down by a white police officer while fleeing in panic from a traffic stop, and a white terrorist emerging, upright and very much alive, from a synagogue after killing 11 people.

That such disparities are systemic is also obvious to last year's Merton awardee, ArchCity Defenders, an organization that fights legal battles every day to reverse the practice in St. Louis's suburbs, such as Ferguson, of supporting municipal budgets by extorting the poorest of its citizens of color, through the imposition of fines, bail bonds, and the costs of legal proceedings and incarcerations.

Given the systemic nature of American

racism and inequality, Taylor describes at length how Black Lives Matter can avoid the fate of the short-lived 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement, by developing organizational structures that are ever more diverse and expansive in addressing the oppressive nature of the country's political and economic structures. The author is unapologetically socialist, but one who takes careful note of the historical distortions created by associating socialism with the Soviet Union, "a country that at one point had been socialist but by this period [post-WWII] had been for many years a one-party authoritarian regime." State

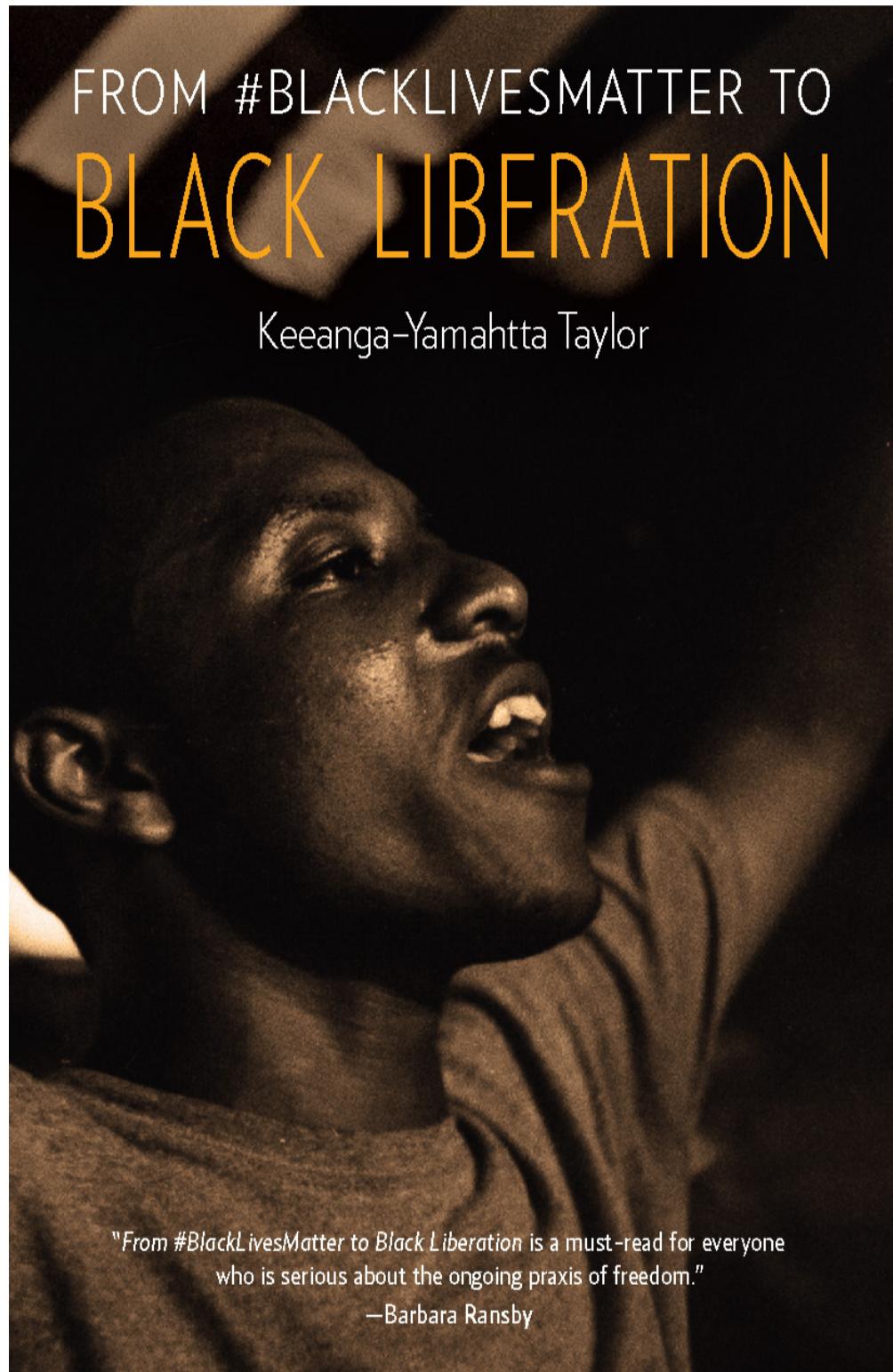
ownership, Taylor argues, is less the issue than who owns the state.

Her animus towards American capitalism is inseparable from her historical understanding of the role of slavery in our economic development. Profit is possible through the exploitation of cheap labor, and no labor was cheaper than that of the slave. Taylor quotes historian Barbara Fields' observation that "the chief business of slavery" was "the production of cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco," not "white supremacy." The myth of white supremacy became more useful when justifying the post-Civil War developments of tenant farming, prison contract labor, strikebreaking, poorly funded schools, and, yes, reactions to Black manifestations of discontent with police violence.

Perhaps the book's most striking piece of analysis comes toward the end of the book, when Taylor tackles the phenomenon of white working-class racism, which she attributes to pervasive ideologies of individualism and black inferiority, but most effectively to the deliberate creation of an economic scarcity which leaves all but the wealthy and upper middle-class fighting over the scraps. White Americans make up the majority of the poor, homeless, and the medically uninsured; Black liberation, writes Taylor, is greatly dependent on exposing "the lie that Black workers are worse off because they somehow choose to be," and winning "the white working class to the understanding that, unless they struggle, they too will continue to live lives of poverty and frustration..."

Taylor, a Princeton University professor, published her latest book last month, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. We look forward to experiencing her scholarly yet forcefully persuasive voice at the August Wilson Center on Friday, November 22.

Neil Cosgrove is a member of the NewPeople editorial collective and the Merton Center board.



HUMAN RIGHTS IN PITTSBURGH

ONE DOOR CLOSURE AT AFSC PITTSBURGH OFFICE OPENS ANOTHER DOOR FOR LOCAL ACTIVISTS

BY BOB GLIDDEN

The recent disappointing but not entirely surprising news that the Pittsburgh office for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has closed signals the end of an era. At the same time, this closure can be seen as a call to action for area activists and organizations hoping to carry on AFSC's long history of internationalist work. For almost 60 years (with a few gaps), the Pittsburgh AFSC chapter has supported people-centered human rights struggles locally while helping build a human rights constituency that can counter the dangerous polarization of politics we see today.

The AFSC was founded in 1917 to give conscientious objectors ways to serve without joining the military or taking lives. During WWI they drove ambulances, ministered to the wounded, and helped rebuild war-ravaged communities. In the century before then, the founding organization, the Religious Society of Friends (also known as "Quakers"), had been involved with anti-slavery activism, urging the boycott of the products of slave labor while some families also assisted slaves in their travels through the Underground Railroad.

Quakers have always been opposed to violence in any form, and many considered their refusal to take part in wars the most important tenet of their religion. Today, AFSC programs address a wide range of issues, countries, and communities. AFSC describes the programs as united by "the unfaltering belief in the essential worth of every human being, non-violence as the way to resolve conflict, and the power of love to overcome oppression, discrimination, and violence."

The AFSC in Pittsburgh began with the establishment of an office in the 1353 Shady Avenue Friends Meeting House breakfast room in 1961 and included a very active interracial youth group. Moving to the 4836 Ellsworth Avenue Meeting House in 1967, the 2nd floor AFSC offices housed the youth program, the volunteer draft and military counseling service

in resistance to the Vietnam War, and the work of social justice, peace and civil rights activists. In the 1970s, Pittsburgh AFSC Pretrial Justice Program struggled with the PA criminal justice system, especially discrimination regarding who got bail, and the resulting costs to People of Color. In 1976, staff member Paul Wahrhaftig established a resource center focused on developing and expanding the work of mediation and conflict resolution around the United States.

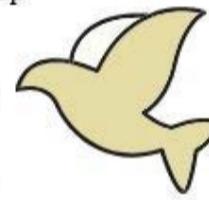
More recently, AFSC youth group work in Pittsburgh centered on Human Rights initiatives. Past AFSC PA Program Director Scilla Wahrhaftig helped inspire

Curious about Quakerism?

YOU ARE WELCOME

at our Meetings for Worship
Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

Pittsburgh Friends Meeting
4836 Ellsworth Avenue
www.quaker.org/pghpamm



and support the Racial Justice Through Human Rights youth group to advance a Human Rights City proclamation for the city. This later led to the creation of the Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance, which works to build alliances among local organizations and individuals to help us realize the vision these youth put forward for their city.

The AFSC was crucial in bringing the idea of Human Rights Cities from movements outside the U.S. into this country and to Pittsburgh. Human Rights Cities are popular initiatives advocating for changes in policies and practices that advance human dignity and equity. AFSC organizers have helped build and support a growing U.S. movement to take back our cities and shift political discourse and economic

development to prioritize human rights and community over profits. The AFSC led work in 2008 to make Washington DC the first US Human Rights City, joining dozens of cities around the world. Youth from Pittsburgh's AFSC student coalition later led the effort to name Pittsburgh the 5th U.S. Human Rights City in 2011.

Locally and nationally, the AFSC's long history of internationalist work and support for anti-racism work and people-centered human rights struggles has contributed a great deal to the multi-racial partnerships and inter-organizational collaboration currently exploring the possibilities for translating the Human Rights City model into the U.S. political context. This coincides with a wave of cuts to AFSC staff and programs across the country due to financial difficulties that AFSC is suffering nationally. A couple of years ago after the closing of the Western Massachusetts AFSC office, the recently-deceased 100 year old activist Frances Crowe said that it's "really very sad, but these national organizations, you know, many of them are dying out." She added that she thinks "the people will come together and figure out how to resolve these problems but [we] can't wait for a national organization to figure it out for them."

Which leads back to why the October 1 closing of Pittsburgh's AFSC office is a significant loss, but also an opportunity. The national and international work of the AFSC still depends on common connections with local activists, since the issues of migration, education, discrimination and climate stabilization require that our efforts are combined. Here at home, organizations must renew our energy in the empowerment of young leaders to carry on that which was started in the Racial Justice Through Human Rights youth group.

Bob Glidden is a co-founder of the Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance

COALITION SUBMITS REPORT TO UN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PITTSBURGH, CENTERS RACIAL INEQUITY

BY JACKIE SMITH

EDITORS NOTE: THIS IS A FOLLOW UP TO A CONTRIBUTION IN THE JUNE ISSUE OF NEWPEOPLE ABOUT THE UPR CITIES INITIATIVE.

A coalition of Pittsburgh activist groups working to support various human rights filed a Stakeholder Report to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report was part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States' human rights record, which solicits documentation from residents about local human rights conditions. International experts and national government leaders will use these reports on U.S. human rights conditions to evaluate the performance report provided by the national government.

The report highlights the role of racial inequity as a core obstacle to the region's human rights performance. It spotlights persistent and worsening racial inequities manifested in the realms of housing insecurity, immigrant rights, health and the environment, and local democracy.

A series of community forums helped identify key human rights concerns and informed the report, which will be used locally by organizers to demand local accountability for securing and protecting human rights for all residents. Pittsburgh is part of a national effort called the UPR Cities initiative —

which includes activists in Chicago, Washington, DC, Atlanta, Jackson, MS, New Orleans, Providence, RI among others—to identify critical human rights concerns and use international institutions to advance human rights in urban contexts.

Citing the recent Gender Analysis of Pittsburgh, the report notes that "racial and social class disparities have been a long-standing and persistent obstacle to the realization of human rights in Pittsburgh." The national political climate and economic development policies have worsened inequities and deprivation in the region, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. In regard to the human right to housing, the report highlighted the substantial deficit of affordable housing, lack of adequate protections for tenant rights, discrimination, and a need to ensure that affordable housing is located in areas accessible to transit and healthy food.

In addition, the UPR report referenced a recent University of Pittsburgh study highlighting an alarming racial gap in life expectancy: there is a 22 year life expectancy differential between the lowest life expectancy neighborhood, which is predominantly Black, and the highest life expectancy (predominantly White) neighborhood. Pittsburgh's rate of infant mortality for Black babies is twice as high it is for White babies. These statistics

result from significant racial disparities in economic security, access to healthy foods, safe living and work environments, and healthy environments. The human right to health is impacted by policies affecting water utilities, the enforcement of national pollution standards, climate change, food security and access, and public transit.

A third area addressed in the report was policing and the criminal punishment system, which was criticized for persistent racial discrimination in policing and incarceration. Significant and highly disproportionate acts of racial profiling, official discrimination, and intimidation of Latinx residents have been documented in this region. Patterns of arrests and detention in Allegheny County Jail show a highly disproportionate impact on Black and Latinx people, individuals suffering from mental illness, and people living in poverty. Although making up only about 13.4 percent of the population of Allegheny County, Black people represent 49 percent of the Allegheny County Jail population. And 60 percent of those detained in the jail have demonstrated symptoms of a mental health disorder.

To remedy these injustices and improve U.S. compliance with international human rights

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BUDGETS AND BS

COHN, TRUMP AND HOW WE ALL SUCCUMB TO BS

Within the next sixteen months we could witness one of four possible events:

- Donald Trump begins serving a second term as US president.
- Donald Trump loses the election, or resigns, and returns to his "normal" business activities.
- Trump loses or resigns and is finally indicted for various criminal actions.
- Trump resigns or is forced from office, and walks across the White House lawn to a waiting helicopter, babbling to himself and too crestfallen to manage even a stiff Nixon wave.

Since November, 2016 many have wondered, like filmmaker Matt Trynauer, "how we could live in such a corrupt system that could support a corrupt authoritarian interloper in the executive branch of government?" Trynauer is the creator of the recently released documentary "Where's My Roy Cohn?", a question attributed to Trump once he realized his attorney general would stay recused from the investigation of Russian election interference.

Cohn, the celebrity lawyer who advised Trump for more than a decade, would never have been so "weak," or so concerned about perceptions of ethical behavior as Jeff Sessions. If he hadn't died of AIDS complications at age 59, it's not too much of a stretch to think Trump would have sought Cohn's appointment as attorney general in 2017, even though his mentor would have been pushing 90.

The late syndicated gossip columnist Liz Smith once opined that "Donald lost his moral compass when he made an alliance with Roy Cohn." Perhaps, but

one suspects Trump wanted to lose that compass as ardently as adolescent boys hope to lose their virginity.

What Trump so admired in Cohn are the very behaviors he himself began to exhibit decades ago. Cohn was not a notably effective lawyer, having been disbarred just months before his death. But he was a "fixer" par excellence, someone who thrived in the unique sphere of New York City power-brokering, cultivating politicians, celebrities, and reporters, doing favors with the clear awareness that he would be looking for a future return, using his press connections to threaten smears of those reluctant to "cooperate." Cohn could "win" even if his legal case was weak, by obstructing, threatening, appealing and generally forcing opponents to ask: "Is fighting him worth it?" Sound familiar? Cohn was famous for saying "I don't care what the law is; tell me who the judge is."

Cohn survived indictments, underpaid the new law school graduates who staffed his firm and did most of the work, stiffed or attempted to stiff clients out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. "He was a wonderful intimidator and bluffer and bullshit artist," Liz Smith told Cohn biographer Nicholas von Hoffman.

"Bullshit artist." The key to understanding both Cohn's and Trump's troubling prominence may be in America's tolerance of and even admiration for hyper-individualism, competitiveness, self-promotion, and the ability to appear competent when you are really just "winging it."

BY NEIL COSGROVE

Much has been made of our President's highly tenuous relationship to the truth, with the *Washington Post* keeping a running account of the thousands upon thousands of untrue statements he has made since January 20, 2017. But an essay published by philosopher Harry Frankfurt in 2005 suggests that understanding what has happened to Trump, and to our country, demands that we see him as a bullshitter, not a liar.

A liar, Frankfurt explains, "deliberately promulgates a falsehood," meaning that the liar both thinks (s)he knows the truth and then seeks to hide it. "The essence of bullshit," on the other hand, is "an indifference to how things are." Whether a statement is true or false is of no matter to the bullshitter. What does matter is the context (which can also be faked) in which a statement is made, and whether the statement being made somehow suits the bullshitter's purpose at that moment.

Frankfurt observes that people are generally more tolerant of bullshit than lies, perhaps reacting to the former with "impatience" or "irritation," but viewing the latter as a "violation" or an "outrage." And it is this insight that most frighteningly foreshadows our current predicament. Through habitual bullshitting "a person's normal habit of attending to the way things are may become attenuated or lost." Roy Cohn, as a "bullshit artist," got away with a lot, until the accumulated weight of his fraud, and his own mortality, caught up with him.

But the worst impact, when both a prominent

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U.S. NATIONAL PRIORITIES - IMMORAL AND DESTRUCTIVE

Picture this: in July, Congressional Republicans and Democrats along with the Trump administration struck a bi-partisan federal budget deal that calls for 54% (\$738 Billion) of our tax dollars to be spent on the military budget and 46% (\$632 billion) for all other non-military programs and activities, according to the U.S. House Committee on the Budget and reported by the National Priorities project. There's something terribly wrong with this picture - but it isn't new as we know from U.S. history and our own experience.

These federal budget figures represent the immoral and destructive national priorities of the U.S. government and its corporate and public backers and benefactors, which have persisted throughout U.S. history in times of war and peace and regardless of the political party in power.

We have seen this unfold from the terrible waste of the U.S. War in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and the failure to enact a "peace dividend" in its aftermath, to the destructive and immoral U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile the wealth gap between the rich and the poor, as well as between white people and people of color, has continued to grow since the late 1960's, along with a withering of the middle class..

In the post-Vietnam era, campaigns for new national budget priorities were launched by a broad alliance of peace and social justice groups, to push the U.S. Congress to transfer or shift federal funding from the military to human and environmental programs. There was hope that the lessons of Vietnam and the continuing need to revitalize our urban and rural areas would lead to a shift in national economic and federal budget priorities.

In spite of the growing strength of these campaigns,

President Carter - facing the 1980 re-election campaign and a drumbeat of right-wing pressure to seek "peace through strength" - increased military spending and cut domestic programs despite a struggling economy. Carter's proposed fiscal year 1980 federal budget called for 46% of federal tax dollars going to the military and 54% to all other federally funded domestic and international development and humanitarian aid, according to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee.

Reagan's ramping up of the nuclear arms race and intervention on the side of Central American dictatorships in the 1980's, followed by the first U.S. military campaign of "shock and awe" in Iraq in the early 1990's and the massive post-9/11/2001 military and national security buildup and ensuing U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, dashed people's hopes at every turn that the U.S. would move in a more progressive direction.

Now, with Trump and his gang ramping up military spending and seeking to make deep, lasting cuts in long-standing economic, social and environmental policies and programs, a national progressive movement to radically shift our national priorities is needed more than ever.

The broadest grassroots movement to organize just such a campaign is the new Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, formed in 2018 to focus on "four evils": systemic racism, poverty, the war economy and environmental degradation. As described in this September's *NewPeople*, the Thomas Merton Center and 60 other progressive groups here and across the state have joined the Pennsylvania Poor People's Campaign, first launched in May 2019.

In June 2019, the national campaign released a

BY CRAIG STEVENS

powerful and comprehensive report, the "Poor People's Moral Budget: Everybody Has a Right to Live," which lays out a vision and specific proposals for radically shifting our national priorities. In summing up its key findings, the report states, "The United States has abundant resources for an economic revival that will move towards establishing a moral economy. This report identifies: \$350 billion in annual military spending cuts that would make the nation and the world more secure; \$886 billion in estimated annual revenue from fair taxes on the wealthy, corporations, and Wall Street; and billions more in savings from ending mass incarceration, addressing climate change, and meeting other key campaign demands."

While we continue to work for peace, economic and racial justice, and a healthy planet at the local level, we must also join together at the national and global level to stand a fighting chance of creating a just and sustainable society and world. The 2019 Poor People's Moral Budget offers one strategy for moving toward that goal.

To access the Moral Budget report, see: <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/budget/>

For analyses and ongoing developments on the federal budget and national priorities issues, see: www.nationalprioritiesproject.org

To learn more about how you can support and get involved in the local and state Poor People's Campaign, contact Krystle Knight, TMC organizer, at: 412-361-3022.

Craig Stevens is a Thomas Merton Center member and New People Collective volunteer

RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST

COUNTY CIVILIAN POLICE REVIEW BOARD BILL THE FINAL CASUALTY OF A PGH DEADLY SUMMER

FROM PAGE 1

6th during a response by Shaler and Hampton police officers to his home. Babbitt was reportedly acting erratically and had access to weapons, and the officers stated that they fired when he aimed a gun at them after exiting the house.



MICHELLE KENNEY, MOTHER OF ANTWON ROSE II, TESTIFIES, SAMUEL DEMARCO III WATCHES

Although two of these shootings didn't involve officers from departments within Allegheny County, they all occurred within county limits and have impacted local communities. Most civilians acknowledge the need for officers to defend themselves in the face of grave threats to their life, but how often are such perceived threats a reality?

These questions are at the heart of the matter when questions of police misconduct arise. In Allegheny

County, the only channel for citizens to initiate any investigation into such claims is through police departments and the District Attorney's office.

Four police-involved shootings occurred in as many weeks in Allegheny County this summer, underscoring the public's urgent call for the County Council to act on the proposed legislation to establish a countywide civilian police review board. A final public comment session on Bill No. 10909-18 was held on August 21. Impassioned testimony was given by many public witnesses, several of whom spoke on behalf of citizens who died during interactions with police officers – including Michelle Kenney, the mother of Antwon Rose II. Other



COUNCILMEMBERS DEWITT WALTON AND PAUL KLEIN, CO-SPONSORS OF BILL NO.10909-18

comments described a deep lack of public trust that the current avenues for reporting police misconduct are adequate to impartially evaluate these cases. University of Pittsburgh Law Professor David Harris spoke in support of the proposed legislation, but noted some areas that he would prefer to see strengthened, in particular the ability of the board to subpoena officers and a lack of provision to provide legal counsel to officers if they are called to testify. Although fewer in number, opponents to the bill cited a perceived burden on taxpayers and general satisfaction with the status quo.



AUGUST 21, 2019, YVONNE BROWN TELLING OF HER SON ANTHONY'S DEATH AFTER AN INTERACTION WITH WILKINSBURG POLICE.

The Council convened again on August 27th, and rejected the measure by a 9-6 vote. Councilmembers Walton and Klein, the authors of the bill, intend to submit another proposal during the next legislative session, starting in 2020, and hopefully with some new faces on the council. Bethany Hallam is an enthusiastic supporter of a civilian police oversight body, and is presently challenging Councilmember At-Large Samuel DeMarco III, a Republican who voted against the bill. Sue Means (R) of District 5, also voted in opposition and is defending her seat in November.

Police must be accountable to the public. The public pressure needs to remain on the Council to write and pass legislation to establish an empowered civilian police oversight board. We can't continue to accept the deaths of our neighbors at the hands of police who react in fear as a tax levied for the privilege of law enforcement in our communities.

Cheryl Bauer is a member of the TMC Editorial Collective

COHN, TRUMP AND HOW WE ALL SUCCUMB TO BS

FROM PAGE 8

leader and the politicians who move in his sphere excessively indulge in bullshit, is that a critical mass of the public begins to think that truth is unknowable. Skepticism becomes a cynicism that concludes seeking truth isn't worth the effort. Then, Frankfurt says, people either choose to stop making any assertions, or think they, as citizens, must have opinions even if uninformed on a matter.

People "continue making assertions that purport to describe the way things are, but that cannot be anything except bullshit." Whatever happens to Trump will be one small step for a man while, in whole or in part, Americans have already taken a giant step into the abyss.

Neil Cosgrove is a member of the NewPeople editorial collective and the Merton Center board

VOTE *Information provided by VoteAllegheny*

2019 Elections Calendar

November: Friday 11/1/19—Last day for county to receive civilian absentee ballots

Tuesday 11/5/19—General election for some judges, Allegheny County Executive, County Council (districts 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13 and at-large seats), County District Attorney, County Controller, County Treasurer, Pgh City Council (odd # districts), City of Pgh Controller, Pgh School Board (even # districts).
Polls open 7am–8pm. www.VotesPA.com for your polling place

Monday 11/25/19—Board of Elections meeting to certify election

VoteAllegheny is a group of volunteers committed to ensuring that citizens of Allegheny County have safe, reliable, accessible, recountable, voter-verifiable elections. Join us at our weekly meetings on Sundays at 4pm, or visit us online at VoteAllegheny.org

HOUSING RIGHT PROCLAIMED

PITTSBURGH JOINS GLOBAL "ZERO EVICTIONS DAYS"

BY JACKIE SMITH

Community activists, along with the City's Commission on Human Relations and Gender Equity Commission held a press conference in early October marking the start of "Zero Evictions Days," with a City Council Proclamation sponsored by Councilperson Erika Strassburger.

Zero Evictions Days is a campaign led by the International Alliance of Inhabitants to raise awareness of the global nature of the housing crisis and to promote "international solidarity to achieve dignity and security in housing" for all people. The Proclamation helps emphasize the need for more concerted government action to protect the human right to housing.

In 2011, the City of Pittsburgh became the fifth Human Rights City in the United States, promising "to provide leadership and advocacy to secure, protect, and promote human rights for all people." Among these rights is the right to housing, food, education, and other basic needs. Local advocates say not enough has been done to fulfill the City's commitment to advancing human rights, of which the right to housing is the most critical.

Following is the text of the City's Proclamation, and it will depend on the efforts of residents to ensure that our political leaders both carry out the commitments made in this document and advance more far-reaching initiatives that will enable all residents to enjoy the human right to a secure and safe home.

**City of Pittsburgh
City Council Proclamation
Zero Evictions Day Proclamation**
recognizes that work is needed to protect housing as a human right, expresses solidarity with the International Alliance of Inhabitants
Zero Evictions Campaign

October 1, 2019
WHEREAS, in 2018, 14,181 eviction court actions—the highest in a decade—were filed by landlords against Allegheny County residents; and,

WHEREAS, between 2014 and 2016, Allegheny County saw 40,000 eviction filings, and Pittsburgh

continues to see a gap of nearly 20,000 affordable housing units; and,

WHEREAS, Pittsburgh residents' experiences reflect a global housing crisis that is producing similar impacts on cities and communities around the world; and,

WHEREAS, housing insecurity and evictions have the most harmful effects on our community's most vulnerable residents, especially children, senior citizens, women, and low-income residents; and,

WHEREAS, housing insecurity disproportionately affects African-American households and other minority groups, contrary to the U.S. government's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); and,

WHEREAS, 71% of Pittsburgh families living in poverty are headed by single women and more subject to housing insecurity; and,

WHEREAS, Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services..."; and,

WHEREAS, in 2011, Pittsburgh became the 5th city in the United States to proclaim itself a "Human Rights City," promising to "to provide leadership and advocacy to secure, protect, and promote human rights for all people"; and,

WHEREAS, in 2016 Pittsburgh became the 6th city in the United States to pass legislation implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, promising to work to overcome discrimination and to encourage and promote access to safe and affordable housing and transportation; and,

WHEREAS, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Adequate Housing has emphasized the need for governments to make human rights "the overriding goal, not a subsidiary or neglected obligation"; and,

WHEREAS, the United Nations also called for concrete steps to achieve adequate housing for all by 2030, by re-establishing housing as a social good and preventing the excessive accumulation of wealth; and,

WHEREAS, the International Alliance of Inhabitants has launched a "Zero Evictions Campaign" to promote "international solidarity to achieve dignity and security in housing," and calling for global actions during the month of October; and,

WHEREAS, a diverse array of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County residents have come together to build a housing justice movement in our region that will center human rights in housing policies and advance human rights and dignity for all residents; and,

WHEREAS, Pittsburgh's City Council has begun to take important steps to address the City's housing crisis, including the establishment of the Housing Opportunity Fund and recent inclusionary zoning legislation.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does affirm its commitment to the human right to housing; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare October 1st, 2019 to be "Zero Evictions Day" in the City of Pittsburgh.

Sponsored by Councilperson Erika Strassburger

Co-sponsored by Councilmembers Bruce A. Kraus, Corey O'Connor, R. Daniel Lavelle, Deb Gross, Darlene M. Harris, Anthony Coghill, Theresa Kail-Smith, and Rev. Ricky V. Burgess
Bruce A. Kraus Attest: Brenda F. Pree, CMC
President of Council Clerk of Council
In Council, October 1st, 2019

Jackie Smith is professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh and a volunteer organizer with the Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance and the national US Human Rights Cities Alliance

COALITION SUBMITS REPORT TO UN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PITTSBURGH, CENTERS RACIAL INEQUITY

FROM PAGE 7

obligations, the report offers the following recommendations, which will help shape local and national advocacy:

1. The U.S. government must work to advance a culture of human rights and democratic values to eliminate racial discrimination, promote racial equity and end racial profiling in the administration of justice;

2. The U.S. must be a better world citizen and take steps to ratify international human rights treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families. In addition, the U.S. must improve its compliance with its legal obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);

3. To better protect the right to health in its cities and communities, the U.S. government must improve national policies to address climate change and to significantly strengthen corporate regulation and enforcement of existing regulations;

4. Cities and communities require more federal funding to allow them to adequately protect the health and well-being of all residents and to implement international human rights obligations. Following a 2017 resolution by the U.S. Conference of Mayors "the United States Congress [should] move our tax dollars ... from militarism to human and environmental needs," and shift more federal funding to U.S. cities.

Coalition supporters will use the UPR report in upcoming forums and other activities to promote public engagement and raise consciousness about these issues while advancing the report's recommendations.

Pittsburgh's UPR coalition members envision a society where people have equitable access to their basic needs, and aim to build networks that support this vision. UN processes like the UPR provide opportunities to bring international attention to persistent human rights problems in Pittsburgh and other cities and to help change the discourse to make human rights the overriding goal of public policy.

Jackie Smith is professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh and a volunteer organizer with the Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance and the national US Human Rights Cities Alliance.

COMMITTED LIVES

KINGS BAY PLOWSHARES SEVEN FOUND GUILTY

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

On October 24, a federal jury in Brunswick, Georgia found the KingsBay Plowshares 7 guilty of all charges found against them.

The Seven - Carmen Trotta, Clare Grady, Elizabeth McAlister, Mark Colville, Martha Hennessy, Patrick O'Neill, and Stephen Kelly, SJ. - face more than 20 years in prison for destruction and depredation of government property in excess of \$1,000, trespassing, and conspiracy.

They have been convicted for exposing illegal and immoral nuclear weapons that threaten all life on Earth. The seven nonviolently and symbolically disarmed the Trident nuclear submarine base at Kings Bay, GA on April 4, 2018, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

This is the petition that was sent to US Attorney General William Barr the week before the trial:

The Kings Bay Plowshares 7 (KBP7) are facing a federal trial and a 25-year prison term for having confronted a system in which nuclear weapons that can destroy all creation are accepted as a normal, even inevitable, part of life...

Kings Bay is homeport to six U.S. nuclear ballistic missile submarines carrying hundreds of nuclear weapons, many of which have up to 30 times the explosive power of the bomb that destroyed the Japanese city of Hiroshima in 1945. Following the

Prophet Isaiah's Biblical command to "beat swords into plowshares" (Is. 2:4), the seven were also acting legally to uphold anti-nuclear treaties as the supreme law of the land according to the U.S. Constitution, international law manifested in the U.N. Charter and the Nuremberg principles. By their actions at Kings Bay, they sought to draw attention to the urgency of withdrawing consent and dismantling what Dr. King called the "triple evils" of racism, excessive materialism, and militarism. The KBP7's action



THE KINGS BAY PLOWSHARES SEVEN
PHOTO BY DEMOCRACY NOW!

statement reads: "Nuclear weapons eviscerate the rule of law, enforce white supremacy, perpetuate endless war and environmental destruction, and ensure impunity for all manner of crimes against humanity. Dr. King said, 'The ultimate logic of racism is genocide.' We say, 'The ultimate logic of Trident is

omnicide. A just and peaceful world is possible when we join prayers with action. Swords into Plowshares!"

We who share the moral vision of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 proclaim our support for their courage and sustained sacrifice and call for the immediate dismissal of all charges against them. The defendants invite us to act creatively. They invite us to join global coalitions working to promote governments' adherence to, and full implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. They also invite us to participate in campaigns for divestment from nuclear weapons as complementary efforts towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.

To support The Kings Bay Plowshares 7, mail checks payable to Plowshares at PO Box 3087, Washington, DC 20010

To participate in local activities opposing nuclear weapons, join the PNC: Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign. Go to facebook.com/StopBankingtheBomb Bi-monthly pickets continue in November on Friday, Nov. 1 at 11:30 AM at PNC Headquarters, Fifth and Wood in downtown Pittsburgh and on Sat., Nov. 16 at 11am, PNC, 401 Beaver Street in Sewickley.

Joyce Rothermel is a coordinating member of the Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign

MERTON CENTER REMEMBERS TWO VALIANT WOMEN: PAT RAMPOLLA AND TONI CONAWAY

In late September, Patricia Rampolla passed away. Although she moved from Pittsburgh several years earlier to be closer to family, many TMC members will remember Pat for her strong faith and service to family and the broader community. Pat was a potter and delighted in sharing the result of her artistic talents with others. Even after her move she continued her affiliation as an associate with the Sisters of Divine Providence. We extend our sympathies to Pat's husband Don and all her family and friends.

In early October, Toni Conaway lost her nearly three-year resistance against cancer. A long-time peacemaker and more recently environmental activist, Toni along with her husband Ray, were Cornerstone Sustainers of the Thomas Merton Center.

Shortly after Toni was married in the 1960's, she and her husband served in VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America). Returning to Pittsburgh, Toni taught middle school, helped to raise her family, and earned a graduate degree in history with a focus on liberation theology.

Her family wrote in Toni's obituary in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Oct. 6, 2019), "Throughout her life Toni was defined by her selflessness, kindness, generosity, devotion to her family and a passion to do all she could to make the world a safer, more humane and just place for all people regardless of race, religion, nationality or economic circumstance and particularly for her precious children and grandchildren. Her passion fueled a near insatiable desire for ever more knowledge about critical issues confronting the world.

"When she believed in a cause neither her conscience nor her personality would permit her to sit passively

by and hope for change. Instead, she was called to action and fully engaged herself in seeking a solution. In the 1980s, fearful of the existential threat to her children and the world posed by the nuclear arms race, she became involved, in a leadership capacity, in the founding and operation of Pennsylvania Peace Links, a volunteer organization of women dedicated to promoting world peace and the reduction of the

nuclear threat through education and advocacy. At its peak the group had several hundred members throughout western Pennsylvania involved in a wide variety of activities and programs promoting peace and social justice. When asked why she invested so much time and energy in a cause that appeared to have such little possibility of success she replied that she did not know whether success was possible but for the sake of her children and grandchildren she chose trying to make a difference over doing nothing.

"She also devoted considerable time and energy in support of other organizations dedicated to teaching conflict resolution, combating hunger and supporting other social justice issues. She participated in citizen diplomacy to promote international understanding. This work took her to Germany, the Soviet Union, and China, where she attended the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In recent years, she became worried about the potentially cataclysmic consequences of climate change and the role of human activity in causing or contributing to it. This concern too was born of her love for her grandchildren. Because she did not believe the issue was receiving adequate attention, she again took action and began researching discrete climate related issues and circulating her findings in weekly emails sent to several hundred friends and acquaintances until her health would not allow her to continue. Nevertheless, her concerns about global warming remained on her mind to the end."

The family suggests donations in her memory to several organizations including the Thomas Merton Center, Gr. Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, and the Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter.

We extend our sympathies to Ray and Toni's family and friends.



TONI CONAWAY

SOLDIERS FOR PEACE

SAINT MARTIN OF TOURS: THE FIRST VETERAN FOR PEACE

BY PAUL DORDAL AND JOHN DAVID KUDRICK

The Veterans For Peace organization was founded in 1985 to draw on veterans' "personal experiences and perspectives gained as veterans to raise public awareness of the true costs of militarism and war—and to seek peaceful, effective alternatives." As we pause to reflect this coming Armistice Day, November 11, it is important to remember this unique call for peace from those who have experienced war's utter senselessness firsthand. Dwight Eisenhower, a WWII general and U.S. president, profoundly declared, "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity." Many so-called war heroes have become the greatest proponents of peace after (and sometimes during) their enlistment.

Yet the question remains why so many millions, even billions, cannot see war's futility and stupidity, and thus resist the evil powers and principalities who constantly call for the use of violence and war to solve conflicts. Currently the United States is fighting its own global war, with tens of thousands of troops stationed in over 170 countries. Any reasonable person, though, can see that this continuous warfare has not resulted in true, lasting peace any place it is being fought. In a recent speech at the United Nations, President Trump noted that the U.S. "is a compassionate nation" who "will forever be a great friend to the world." These words could not have rung more hollow to those who actually listened.

For many veterans and others, a time comes when the soul, mind, and body become one and there is a change in attitudes, beliefs, and actions toward war and violence. For some veterans the experience of participating in or preparing for war becomes the "Aha!" moment that helps them realize just

how wrong and futile war can be—even the most supposedly "just war."

As I (Paul) was reflecting on my own "Aha!" moment and the decision I made after returning from the Iraq War that I could not as a Christian be involved with war anymore, I read about another veteran who could not participate in the military or engage in violence after his own epiphany. St. Martin of Tours converted to Christ in the fourth century. Soon afterward, while on patrol, Martin saw a shivering beggar alongside the road. Dressed in his military regalia, Martin tore his cape in two, gave half to the beggar, and declared, "I am the soldier of Christ: it is not lawful for me to fight." Upon hearing of Martin's conscientious objection, his military superiors charged him with cowardice and imprisoned him. Yet he remained convinced, as so many others have since, that to be a Christian precludes one from serving in any military—that Christians are peacemakers, not violence seekers. St. Martin of Tours could well be known as the first veteran for peace; if not the first, then at least one of the most remarkable.

Pondering the story of St. Martin, I (John David) am struck at how he took compassionate action as a great friend toward the beggar by choosing not to fall into the typical "us and them" thinking that dehumanizes people—denying and/or ignoring the inherent mystery, beauty, and wonder of every person in the global tribe of humanity. For it is such "us and them" thinking that allows intentional, accepted, and applauded violence and war against humanity in the name of "keeping the peace," although it never leads to real peace among us.

As recognized by almost every Christian group in the world, the Feast of St. Martin of Tours is held, ironically, on November 11. For Christians and all peace seekers, then, Armistice Day should be a clarion call not necessarily to celebrate the sacrifices of veterans, but to recognize the sacrifice of true peacemakers like Christ to end all wars and violence—and especially to celebrate them by becoming peacemakers ourselves.

Veterans For Peace has a catchy motto that some members regularly use: "If you are not a veteran for peace, then what are you a veteran for?" Upon reflecting on the words and deeds of St. Martin of Tours (and, of course, the eternal words and deeds of Jesus), should not Christians and, really, all people also say and believe: "If you are not a person for peace, then what are you for?"

Paul Dordal and John David Kudrick are the co-founders of the newly formed group, Christian Alliance For Peace (facebook.com/ChristianAllianceForPeace).



OCTOBER 5TH PEACE MARCH

PHOTOS BY NEIL COSGROVE



MARCHERS LISTEN TO SPEAKERS AT THE CORNER OF CRAIG AND FIFTH.



THE MARCH FOR PEACE PROCEEDS UP FORBES AVENUE ON OCTOBER 5, 2019 AFTER GATHERING AT SCHENLEY PLAZA.



"WE DON'T JUST FIGHT WARS INTERNATIONALLY, BUT ALSO DOMESTICALLY," LAURA PERKINS OF CASA SAN JOSE TOLD MARCHERS.



VETERANS FOR PEACE MAKE THEIR PRESENCE KNOWN IN FRONT OF PITT'S WEBSTER HALL.

From event organizers:

"Right now the United States is involved in countless wars that are ruining the lives of people around the globe by promoting violence and the destruction of the natural world. Every year the U.S. government also spends billions of dollars financing these wars at the expense of domestic social and job service projects. And with the military hardware that never gets used, the federal government transfers it to state and local police departments to be used on the domestic population often at times of civil unrest."

Attend the 3rd Annual March For Peace and help us end Pittsburgh's role in the global military industrial complex that exploits so many in the name of profit rich and wealthy.

Demands:

1. We demand an immediate end to all forms of war in which the United States is currently engaged.
2. We demand an immediate reduction of the U.S. military budget by at least half, including nuclear weapon divestment, with reinvestment into social & infrastructure programs.
3. We demand an end to the militarization of domestic law enforcement organizations."

EVENTS CALENDAR

4 NOV, MON. 7 – 9pm.

“The Racist Next Door: How to Have Anti-Racist Conversations”. Kearns Spirituality Center

5 NOV, TUE. 7 – 9pm.

Screening: PLASTIC PARADISE

Christ Methodist Church, 44 Highland Rd., Bethel Park.

6 NOV, WED. 5 – 8pm.

Bus Stop Consolidation - Canvass for Rider Input. Crazy Mocha on Liberty Ave/Tito Way

7 NOV, THU. 7 – 9pm.

Seeing Which Is Being Which Is Acting. Gumberg Library

11 NOV, MON 7PM.

“Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence” Warren United Methodist Church, 2606 Centre Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219.

11 NOV, MON. 7 – 10pm.

“Learn from the Past; Move into the Future”. Warren United Methodist Church

14 NOV, THU. 6:30 – 9pm.

Potluck with speaker: Suzanne Weiss, author of Holocaust to Resistance

Thomas Merton Center

Thursday, November 14. 7 – 8pm

Poets Marilyn Nelson & Sonia Sanchez, Presented by Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures. Carnegie Library Lecture Hall. 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

19 NOV, TUE. All day.

Plastic Paradise film

Christ United Methodist Church.

Tuesday, November 19. 9am – 5pm

Seventh Annual Shale & Public Health Conference. 123 University Pl

22 NOV, FRI. 5 – 10pm

2019 Thomas Merton Award

980 Liberty Ave, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

“Peace demands the most heroic labor and the most difficult sacrifice. It demands greater heroism than war. It demands greater fidelity to the truth and a much more perfect purity of conscience.”

-Thomas Merton

The Thomas Merton Center works to build a consciousness of values and to raise the moral questions involved in the issues of war, poverty, racism, classism, economic justice, oppression and environmental justice.

TMC engages people of diverse philosophies and faiths who find common ground in the nonviolent struggle to bring about a more peaceful and just world.

The NewPeople is invested in fostering conversation around topics that affect communities and vulnerable groups both locally and globally. We encourage contributions for each issue from the public that will generate conversation and we invite perspectives that are not widely considered. Opinions expressed in the published articles do not necessarily represent those of the Thomas Merton Center or its Editorial Collective.

REGULAR MEETINGS

Sundays:

Book'Em: Books to Prisoners Project

First three Sundays of the month at TMC, 4-6pm

Contact: bookempgh@gmail.com

Mondays:

SW Healthcare 4 All PA /PUSH Meeting

3rd Monday, 6:30 – 8 pm

Squirrel Hill Library

Contact: bMason@gmail.com

Association of Pittsburgh Priests

2nd Monday, 7 – 9 pm,

Prince of Peace Center, 81 South 13th St.,

Southside, Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILP)

2nd Monday, 7:00 PM

Thomas Merton Center, 5129 Penn Ave

Amnesty International #39

2nd Wednesday, 7 – 9 pm

First Unitarian Church, Morewood Ave. 15213

Tuesdays:

Black Political Empowerment Project

Second Tuesday of the Month, Hill House Association,

2nd Floor, 1835 Centre Ave. 6pm.

Green Party of Allegheny County

1st Tuesday, 6-8pm

Panera, 3401 Blvd of the Allies, Oakland

412-532-9194 alleghenycountygreens@gmail.com

Wednesdays:

Darfur Coalition Meeting

1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:00 pm,

Meeting Room C Carnegie Library, Squirrel Hill

412-784-0256

Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (PADP)

1st Wednesdays, 7-8pm, First Unitarian Church, Ellsworth & Morewood Avenues, Shadyside

Pittsburghers for Public Transit

2nd Wednesday, 7pm, 1 Smithfield St., lower level

Thursdays:

Global Pittsburgh Happy Hour

1st Thursday, 5:30 to 8 pm, Roland's Seafood Grill, 1904

Penn Ave, Strip District

Black Political Empowerment Project

2nd Thursday, 6 pm: Planning Council Meeting, Hill House, Conference Room B

Fridays:

Unblurred Gallery Crawl

1st Friday after 6 pm, Penn Avenue Arts District, 4800-5500 Penn Ave., Friendship and Garfield 15224

Hill District Consensus Group

2nd Thursday, 6pm - 8pm, Hill House Conference Room 2

People of Prisoners in Need of Support

3rd Friday, 7:00pm New Hope Methodist Church, 114 W. North Ave, Pittsburgh 15212

Saturdays:

Project to End Human Trafficking

2nd Sat., Carlow University, Antonian Room #502

Fight for Lifers West

1st & 3rd Saturday, 1 pm, TMC Annex

BECOME A MEMBER

Subscribe to The NewPeople by becoming a member of the Thomas Merton Center today!

As a member, The NewPeople newspaper will be mailed to your home or sent to your email account. You will also receive weekly e-blasts focusing on peace and justice events in Pittsburgh, and special invitations to membership activities. Now is the time to stand for peace and justice!

Join online at ThomasMertonCenter.org/membership-and-donation or fill out this form, cut out, and mail in.

Select your membership level:

\$15 Low Income Membership

\$15 Youth / Student Membership

Please complete and return to TMC. Thank you!

Name(s):

Organization (if any):

Address:

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____

Mobile Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail to TMC, 5129 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Call 412-361-3022 for more information, or visit:

ThomasMertonCenter.org