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***WWFOR** seeks to replace violence, war, racism and economic injustice with nonviolence, equality, peace and justice. It links and strengthens FOR members and chapters throughout Western Washington in promoting activities consistent with the national FOR statement of purpose. WWFOR helps members and chapters accomplish together what we could not accomplish alone.*

### What are we going to do about those 74 million people who voted for Trump?

by Jean Gant Delastrada, WWFOR Fall Retreat Coordinator

This question came up over and over at the WWFOR 2020 Fall Retreat –*What’s Next? Moving Into the Great Turning* – held virtually.

Rev. Dr. Emma Jordan Simpson, the Executive Director of FOR-USA, emphasized that people need to talk about the hard issues with others in their communities and in their families, regardless of their politics.

Bill Moyer, from the Backbone Campaign, talked about new ways for activists to impact our society, beyond holding up signs saying what we want and believe in.

Dr. Karen Johnson, equity and social justice consultant from Olympia, asked “Are You Next?”, and gave a dynamic call for us **all** to work together with Black Lives Matter for racial justice.

Joanna Macy’s *Three Stories and the Work that Reconnects* offered a framework for responding to the challenge of the present Great Unravelling. In a current video clip, the 91 year old ecosystems activist spoke to the challenges of our present time.

We ended the day with “Voices of the Future”, a panel about the current work and future goals of some young activists from our Mike Yarrow Peace Fellowship Program.

This Zoom retreat brought 122 initial registrants, who expressed high interest in all the issues we asked about: Racial Justice, Climate Action, Indigenous People, Homeless and Displaced Persons, Covid-19, and Nuclear Weapons. All received resources on how to work on these issues now, despite the pandemic. We missed the fellowship of our usual face-to-face retreat, but the 75 plus registrants who attended online had opportunities to ask questions of the speakers, and to meet in small groups in breakout rooms to discuss their reactions.

We went away with a strong message of the importance of community, connecting on a grassroots level to communicate and work together for a sustainable society in the year ahead.

Link to a recording of the Fall Retreat <https://youtu.be/AmLLh0HS8F8>

### Why We Should Care About Yemen

by **Mary Anne Mercer**, Senior Lecturer Emerita in the Department of Global Health at the University of Washington.

Basic facts: Yemen is a country of some 30 million people, located at the heel of the boot of the Arabian Peninsula. It is a country with a rich cultural and religious history. For over 2000 years, what is now Yemen was the center of a series of powerful kingdoms that controlled commerce in the luxury goods of the time —frankincense, myrrh, and spices. The first cup of coffee was brewed in Yemen, and the port of Mokha was once the center of the coffee trade. As described in both the Bible and the Quran, the famed Queen of Sheba ruled the area nearly 1000 years BCE, at the time of her famed visit to the wise King Solomon. The area is also claimed by some to be the home of Old Testament figures. In the Arab tradition, the capital city of the north, now Sana’a, was founded by Shem, the eldest son of Noah. The country is also a visual and audio extravaganza: in addition to ancient Yemeni settlements of unparalleled architectural beauty, the poetic music of the north has been deemed a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO.

But today, Yemen is starving.

In modern times, the country has struggled with poverty, due in large part to arid and mountainous geography, corruption, economic mismanagement, and more recently, depleted oil reserves. Then, in 2014, what began as an internal conflict turned into a David-and-Goliath war between the Houthi rebel group and Saudi Arabia, supported by the United States and a coalition of like-minded countries. Since 2015, the people of the ancient land of Yemen have suffered from ongoing, relentless air strikes, many of which target civilian structures: schools, hospitals, markets, farms, and water treatment facilities. Yemen needs to import most of its food products, and the coalition has also blockaded the Yemeni shipping ports, leading to dire shortages of food, fuel, and other essential items.

These assaults on an already poor country have brought about nearly every type of disaster known to humankind: over 200,000 people killed from violence that is, lest we forget, supported by U.S. taxpayers; the worst continuous outbreak of cholera ever recorded, the result of contaminated water; massive internal displacement of over three million people needing to escape the bombing; and destruction of two-thirds of health facilities. All of these catastrophes have contributed to famine, with 80% the population in need of food aid to live, and over two million children near the brink of starvation. Taken together, the bombing and the blockade have turned



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this country into the largest humanitarian disaster in the world.

**People in Yemen tell us they would rather die of COVID-19 than hunger.**

The latest blow has been the introduction of COVID-19. Yemen's communal life styles and poverty have made social distancing nearly impossible. Severe water shortages make even regular hand-washing difficult. UN findings now suggest that in this malnourished population, 29% of people who are infected are dying, compared to the 7% global average. The pandemic pushes the country even further towards famine. What else can Yemen endure? As Aisha Jumaan, a Yemeni-American, describes it, "People in Yemen tell us they would rather die of COVID-19 than die of hunger, as it is a faster and less painful death."

Much of the official Western world has responded with apathy to these phenomenal levels of suffering. The U.S., for the most part, simply denies responsibility for these crimes against humanity. The U.S. government provided modest levels of aid until March 2020 when, claiming a lack of cooperation by the Houthis, most aid to the Houthi north was withdrawn—including funding to combat COVID-19. Similarly, the World Food Program, on which millions of Yemeni families depend for their lives, announced in October 2020 that the number of people reached would be reduced by nearly one-third because of funding cuts. Initial available data from the Southern parts of Yemen, where 30% of the population lives, indicate that at least 100,000 children are at risk of famine — of starving to death.

Americans of diverse political stripes see our support for this pointless war as misguided and criminal. Thanks to a barrage of advocacy efforts in support of the Yemeni population, in 2019 both houses of the US congress passed a law citing the War Powers Act that would limit our military support to Saudi Arabia without the consent of Congress. That bill was promptly vetoed by President Trump. More recently, the Trump administration has pushed for sales of stealth fighter jets and armed drones to the United Arab Emirates, a member of the Saudi coalition.

We must care about Yemen. They are people suffering unbelievable trauma, and our country is instrumental in causing this disaster. The international human rights community recognizes the assaults on Yemeni civilians for what they are: war crimes. And it is widely understood that the Saudi regime would not be able to conduct this vicious war without both logistical support and arms sales from the U.S.

We must do more than care. Our president-elect Joe Biden has pledged to withdraw support for the Saudi war in Yemen. It will be up to us to hold him to that promise.

**Links to resources for action on Yemen:**

Action Corps <https://www.actioncorps.org/yemen>

**More links to resources for action on Yemen:**

Freedom Forward <https://freedomforward.org/category/yemen/>

Yemeni Alliance Committee <https://endtheyemenwar.carrd.co/>

**To donate for humanitarian relief:**  
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation <https://yemenfoundation.org/>

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**Celebrating a Historic Step Toward the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons**

*by Mona Lee, Ground Zero for Nonviolent Action activist*

This is a historic time of celebration for Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action and other organizational members of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). On October 24, 2020 Honduras became the 50<sup>th</sup> nation to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Note: it was passed in July). With that, the treaty will enter into force on January 22, 2021. Ground Zero will celebrate this event during its annual Martin Luther King birthday weekend activities January 15-17.

The passing of this Treaty marks a significant milestone in a long effort to abolish nuclear weapons. 75 years ago, in response to World War II and the horrific nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United Nations was founded to develop cooperation among nations and prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again.

Article VI of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty mandates the nuclear weapon states to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." Additionally, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed in 1991 limited the number of warheads that could be deployed. Even so, today nine countries possess a total of

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13,410 nuclear warheads with approximately 91 percent of all nuclear warheads owned by the U.S. and Russia. These weapons are many times more powerful than the bombs that wiped out Hiroshima, killing and maiming thousands of innocent citizens.

More recently, ICAN organized a series of three international anti-nuclear weapons conferences: one in Oslo, Norway in 2013; the second in Nayarit, Mexico in 2014; and another in Vienna, also in 2014. These meetings focused upon the horrific health effects of nuclear weapons testing upon downwinders: Utah residents downwind of the Nevada nuclear testing; the Marshall Islanders in the Pacific; and the villages of Kazakhstan downwind of Soviet nuclear tests. Hundreds of bombs have been dropped, and their radiation has caused widespread cancers and untimely deaths of thousands of people in those parts of the world.

At the 2014 conference in Vienna, the Austrian government promised to develop a nuclear weapons ban treaty. The result was the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which was adopted in 2017. Because of this accomplishment, ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in that year. But it was not until October of this year that enough nations had ratified the treaty. The Ban Treaty will enter into force on January 22, 2021.

So, what are we celebrating? Not one of the nine countries that possess the thousands of nuclear weapons has signed onto the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Because they are not signatories to the Treaty, neither the US nor Russia, nor any of the other nuclear armed nations, can be called before the Hague Tribunal because they are in violation of international law. However, according to Dr. Ira Helfand of the ICAN Steering Committee and many other experts, this Treaty will give the rest of the world a “powerful tool” to stigmatize the nuclear armed nations that own these weapons as well as the corporations that build them. We all have a role to play in doing the persuading.

Although Ground Zero has persisted in its resistance to nuclear weapons over the years, the general public has largely forgotten them since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980’s. However, recently there is growing awareness of nuclear weapons and the dangers they pose to humanity. More people are waking up to the reality that the possibility of nuclear war is greater than it has ever been. A wider grass roots campaign called “Back from the Brink” has been endorsed by many cities and several state legislatures. They call for the US to lead a global effort to take such actions as:

- Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first.
- Ending the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack.
- Taking the U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.
- Cancelling the plan to replace its entire arsenal with enhanced weapons.
- Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear weapons.

Therefore, while we are celebrating, we will take action to use the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as leverage to pressure our government to come into compliance with international law and with its moral obligation to rid humanity of its gravest threat.



### The American People are United on Key Policy Issues

by John M Repp, WWFOR Pacific Call editor

There has been so much corporate media commentary lately about the huge divisions running through our political landscape. Republican, Democrat; conservative, liberal; urban, rural; black, white; high-school educated, college-educated; male, female; coastal, heartland and more. There is an element of truth to all this. What is left out is what many Americans agree on.

All polls agree. Americans think that we should tax the wealthy. Americans think we need Medicare for All. Americans think we need a Green New Deal. The legislation to enact a Green New Deal includes the right to a good, living-wage, union job with full benefits. In the last forty years, with neoliberal policies, too many unions have been busted and average wages have been held to basically the level of wages in 1970 while the cost of living has risen.

To quote from the Economic Policy Institute : ‘From 1978 to 2018, CEO compensation grew by 1,007.5%, far outstripping S&P stock market (706.7%) and the wage growth of very high earners (339.2%). In contrast, wages for the typical worker grew by just 11.9%.’ The Rand Corporation found that about \$50 trillion has been transferred from the poor and middle classes to the wealthy in the last 40 years.

In the United States, we like to think of ourselves as “the land of the free and home of the brave”. **In contemporary society, a person cannot be free if they do not have a good income and some accessible wealth.** It came as a shock to many in 2014, when researchers found out that 47% of Americans could not come up with \$400 in case of an emergency.

The question then becomes: if we are a healthy democracy, why don’t these agreements of the American people make their way into law and policy? I suspect many people already know the answer. I quote from an Atlantic article summarizing a famous 2014 study by Gilens and Page: “Economic elites and narrow interest groups were very influential: They succeeded in getting their favored policies adopted about half of the time, and in stopping legislation to which they were opposed nearly all of the time. Mass-based interest groups, meanwhile, had little effect on public policy. As for the views of ordinary citizens, they had virtually no independent effect at all.” The people who said they wanted the wealthy to be taxed, Medicare for All and a Green New Deal were the same demographic as the “ordinary citizens” of the Gilens and Page study.

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The massive amount of money in our election process and lobbying industry is the tool kit used by the economic elites to get their favored policies translated into law and policy. To paraphrase a famous right-wing book, none dare call it bribery.

So, what must be done for the policy preferences of ordinary people to be made into law? It could be done through elections if most candidates were like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. It could be done if progressives had a much larger media presence, even an equal presence, in radio, television, Facebook and the rest of the Internet. It could be done if vast numbers of ordinary people came to understand nonviolent strategy and learned to creatively use the 198 methods of nonviolent direct action. (Organizing huge numbers of people to go into the streets and demonstrate is but **one** of the 198 methods.) A vigorous nonviolent direct-action campaign **combined** with the election of candidates who support the policies people want, and need, is the bare outline of a strategy. We are getting closer to that good reality as more and more young people experience a vastly different world than those who came of age in the 1960's.

Surveys of the Nordic countries, Norway, Denmark and Finland tell us that the people in those countries are happier than Americans. The wealth gap there is much, much smaller than here. Women are less dependent on men because of generous government programs that help them when they are pregnant and their children are young. There is nation-wide collective bargaining between unions and corporations. Conservative Americans like to call the Nordic model a "nanny state". Then should we call our government "a monster state"?

If our political leaders listened to the vast majority of ordinary people and implemented the policies that majority agrees upon – tax the rich, health care for all and taking care of our natural environment – our country would be happier and healthier.

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**IS TALK RADIO THE TRUMP/REPUBLICAN SECRET?**

By John M Repp, WWFOR Pacific Call Editor

Asking the question "how did Trump get 74 million votes?" requires a look at the mass media in the United States. Many know about the FOX news channel on television, but too often overlooked is conservative talk radio. There are two recent books out about talk radio as well as articles by the book's authors. (Paul Matzko The Radio Right: How a Band of Broadcasters Took on the Federal Government and Built the Modern Conservative Movement (2020) and Brian Rosenwald Talk Radio's America: How an Industry Took Over a Political Party That Took Over the United States (2019)

Many white collar workers are not aware of talk radio's existence because they do not listen to the radio while they work like factory and construction workers and long-haul truck drivers.

As television came to dominate the mass media in the

1950's and music jumped to FM, AM radio stations were suffering. That is when conservative talk radio jumped in and started to grow.

What happened next is not so well known. President Kennedy realized the growing power of AM conservative talk radio, and he used IRS audits and FCC rule of "fair and balanced" to put many of the stations out of business. That accounts in part for the paranoia about the "left" often heard on these stations. And we know that the rule "fair and balanced" as part of the communications law was repealed in 1987. Today it is the cynical slogan of FOX.

Both books, as you can read by their subtitles, think conservative talk radio hosts have more power in some ways than the Republican Party politicians. The hosts have no responsibility to govern and can take positions far to the right of legislators or executives that have to run for election.

Of the 15 top radio talk shows, only one is liberal.



A great cause of current concern that can be partly traced back to conservative talk radio is Covid-19 denialism. How many of the people who will not wear masks and scream about "freedom" are conservative talk radio listeners?

Sadly, many of Trump's talking points about the pandemic come from talk radio rather than from public health experts. Of all the developed nations in the world, the United States is doing the worst. By far!

What will be the Republican strategy going forward?

It looks like they will be trying to sabotage Biden's presidency (and the country) like they did with Obama's.

