

SONOMA COUNTY

# peace press

Publication of the Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County  
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*in this issue*

- A Tale of Two Americas
- Houseless People Living the Coronavirus Crisis
- Disaster Capitalism and COVID-19
- Save the US Postal Service

*...more inside*

# BLACK

# LIVES

# MATTER!

*without justice we'll never have peace*



Newsletter of the Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County,  
an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR).  
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*This issue of the Peace Press is dedicated to the memory of George Floyd and Andy Lopez and all the other People of Color who have been murdered by Law Enforcement.*

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## GETTING CENTERED

# Dear Friends of the Peace & Justice Center,

*Shekeyna Black*

In lieu of the regular Getting Centered column, we are publishing our Spring Appeal Letter and will continue the fight for justice.

During this unprecedented and challenging time of the global pandemic, we hope you and yours are weathering the proverbial storm. It is with great sadness that we need to inform you, our loyal members, that the Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County is in a dire financial situation specifically related to the mandatory Shelter in Place orders. We are unable to host any fundraisers nor have meetings at our location; both of these activities are part of our income stream.

It was decided that in order to keep our nonprofit organization afloat during this crisis, the Executive Director would need to be laid-off. The E.D. is the only paid employee position at the PJC. “Hopefully, the lay-off will be temporary; however, in the meantime, I will continue to take care of the regular business for the Peace & Justice Center on a strictly volunteer basis from home,” says, Executive Director, Shekeyna Black.

The Peace & Justice Center remains a vital community resource and has shifted much of its outreach online. We are unable to print and mail the *Peace Press* to our members at this time; however, we hope you will access it on our website, [www.pjcsoco.org/peace-press](http://www.pjcsoco.org/peace-press).

Please read the thought-provoking articles and share the *Peace Press* with your family and friends. We will continue to send our weekly e-newsletter that has morphed from an email calendar of event listings to a Community Resource Guide. Additionally, we invite you to connect us at [www.facebook.com/PJCSonoma](http://www.facebook.com/PJCSonoma).

We are asking you to make a monetary donation in the amount you are able to our annual Spring Appeal drive. We fully realize that many folks have been laid off and most people have been adversely impacted financially by the pandemic emergency.

No donation amount is too small. Those who are financially stable, we hope you are more generous with your donation to our Spring Appeal.

The Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County has been serving our community for 36 years and we are not going to let this pandemic or economic hardship shut us down. We firmly believe, with your help and the help of our membership base, that we will overcome this fiscal crisis. We have added a safe and convenient Donate tab to our website at [www.pjcsoco.org](http://www.pjcsoco.org) where you can make a donation to our Spring Appeal. Or mail checks directly to the Peace & Justice Center at 467 Sebastopol Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

We need your financial contribution now more than ever! 🙏

## Houseless People Living The Coronavirus Crisis

*Adrienne Lauby*

As I write this at the beginning of May, most of Sonoma County’s law enforcement is following the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, which say that if individual housing is not available, homeless people should be allowed to remain where they are.

For the more than 2,000 homeless people who sleep outside every night in Sonoma County, this means relief from constant police surveillance and harassment. The cops are less likely to knock on the car window, tug open the tent flap or shine a flashlight in a face as they order some vulnerable person to “move along” because “you can’t stay here.”

Sonoma County & the City of Sebastopol have set up 52 new public hand-washing stations and 38 porta potties.

Slowly, homeless people are moving from hiding places into visible camps like those near Doyle Park, under the 101 freeway and alongside the Russian River in Guerneville. These camps are generally good for people’s health, allowing them to be near others for safety, share more nutritious food and have access to other basic services. But they put people at greater risk for COVID-19. It’s

difficult to observe social distancing at an unmanaged homeless camp.

At Los Guilicos Village, when the coronavirus crisis hit, the homeless residents lost their shuttle service and were confined to the area except for pre-approved essential needs. Because volunteers are limited at Los Guilicos Village due to the hostility of some of the Oakmont neighbors, the lack of community is a problem. Although residents have three meals a day, a private room and a few other amenities, the restrictions make life difficult at the Village.

The county set up the ten trailers provided by the State of California in a lot near the fairgrounds. Seventeen homeless individuals have moved into these trailers. As of May 1, Sonoma County set up rooms in a Sonoma State dormitory for approximately 140 homeless people who are particularly at risk of COVID-19. These folks are over 65 or have an immune-deficiency disease and were referred by various health centers. They come from all areas of the county. No alcohol or drugs are allowed – not even marijuana – and everyone is searched before entering the buildings. These folks are less restricted in their movement than the Los Guilicos residents, and volunteers are

being encouraged – with social distancing – to provide activities and accompany people to nearby stores and natural settings.

It’s impossible to talk about homeless people without talking about those who are not homeless. “Next Door” neighborhood discussions in Santa Rosa’s Doyle Park & West End, near the fairgrounds and in Rohnert Park have erupted with complaints, stereotypes and assumptions. Unmanaged camps are truly a problem for those in nearby houses, but the underlying lack of empathy and parroting of ‘right wing’ views of casting the blame on those who suffer *does nothing to solve the problem*. Fortunately, some people post positive advice about what to do or who to contact for problems that can’t be worked out between a homeless camper and a homeowner.

There are heroes in this situation, primarily those homeless people who continue to live with dignity and kindness toward each other. Without television, radio or the Internet, most of the standard coronavirus advice to “cover your mouth when you cough and stay 6 feet apart from others” has spread through ‘word-of-mouth.’ And within each camp, individuals organize their neighbors to respect each other

*Houseless People...see page 3*

# A Tale of Two Americas

Tracey L. Rogers

Gun-toting quarantine protesters are called “very good people,” while unarmed people protesting police violence are “thugs.”

ists seeking justice for George Floyd to the white protestors who entered the state capitol building in Michigan last month, armed with rifles, confederate flags, and other symbols

police violence. Just last month in New York, Shakheim Brunson was beaten and pinned to the ground by police after being asked to disperse in compliance with social distance orders.



Gun-toting quarantine protesters are called “very good people,” while unarmed people protesting police violence are “thugs.”

Tracey L. Rogers

As protests and riots spread like wildfire across the nation in response to the death of George Floyd and other black people at the hands of white police officers, I cannot help but recall an old African Proverb:

“The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.”

Protests and riots are a part of this country’s history, from the Holy Week Uprisings that occurred after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to the Los Angeles riots that took place after police were acquitted of severely beating Rodney King in 1992.

Of course, I do not condone the looting and violence that often follow public gatherings of unrest. But as a black woman living in a racist society, I know the pain and frustrations of those who are sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Dr. King once said in a speech that, “A riot is the language of the unheard.” For far too long, Black Americans have gone unheard.

The injustices that plague us become especially unbearable when you compare the mostly peaceful organizing by black activ-

of the slave-owning south, to reject — of all things — COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.

President Trump tweeted his support for those protestors. “These are very good people,” he said, “but they are angry. They want their lives back again, safely!”

But when unarmed black people took to the streets for Mr. Floyd, Trump tweeted, “These THUGS are dishonoring his memory, and I won’t let that happen.”

What the president and others don’t realize is that we’re not *just* protesting the death of George Floyd (or Breonna Taylor, or Ahmaud

Arbery, or Eric Garner, or Alton Sterling, or Philando Castile). We are also protesting the racist culture embedded in police precincts throughout the nation — and the brutality that comes with it.

When Sacramento police shot and killed Stephon Clark in 2017, 84 people were arrested in a subsequent peaceful march against

And of course, peaceful, unarmed protesters are being violently attacked by police across the country today — most recently so Trump could enjoy a photo-op outside a Washington, D.C. church.

This is the infamous tale of two Americas.

Black protestors get pegged as “Black Identity Extremists” by the FBI and can be prosecuted as domestic terrorists.

If you’re a real-life white identity extremist, on the other hand, you can actually join the ranks of the law enforcement. “There is a long history of the military, police, and other authorities supporting, protecting, or even being members of white supremacy groups,” wrote Rashad Robinson in *The Guardian* last year.

All this comes around the 99th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre that took place in 1921, when white mobs rampaged against black people and black-owned businesses. Private planes from a nearby airfield even dropped firebombs on black neighborhoods, wiping out a district then known as “Black Wall Street.”

Who were the “thugs” in this incident?

**“Dr. King once said in a speech that, ‘A riot is the language of the unheard.’ For far too long, Black Americans have gone unheard.”**

And, as Dr. King asked in his speech on riots, “What is it that America has failed to hear?”

This injustice is precisely why we march. This is why we protest. This is why we chant, “no justice, no peace.” 🙏

Tracey L. Rogers is an entrepreneur and activist living in Philadelphia. Distributed by OtherWords.org.



# Disaster Capitalism and COVID-19

*Rebel Fagin*

This pandemic is frightening and disorienting. Corporate capitalists are taking full advantage of it by using the Shock Doctrine and Disaster Capitalism to maximize profits.

Disaster Capitalism means profiting off of disasters. The Shock Doctrine pushes through agendas quickly, while we are distracted by the crisis, to create laws that further enrich them while endangering us.

The Trump task force on COVID-19 is headed by Rear Admiral John Polowczyk, who has experience in coordinating large-scale disbursements, and Jared Kushner, who doesn't. There is no transparency. They are rewarding friends and punishing political enemies. 40% of resources go to the Federal government, 40% go where the task force dictates and 20% where producers choose (think profits). One potential supplier bought \$20,000 of materials to make face shields domestically. Once production had begun the Kushner group cancelled it.

"That was a hell of an investment on our part that was met with layer upon layer of resistance and difficulty," said a representative of this small manufacturer.

Corruption is rampant. DuPont is one example. The Federal government spent our tax money to ship materials to Vietnam for manufacturing medical protective suits, then paid to send the finished suits back, where DuPont sold them to a third party for \$4 each. We don't know how much this anonymous third party is charging us for these suits. They are also hijacking purchased supplies heading for states and cities.

"We have been notified by Cardinal Health,

our source of isolation gowns, that FEMA is intervening and taking the US supply from Cardinal's manufacturer," a Kaiser document states.

One of the first industries benefiting from Shock Doctrine legislation is the fossil fuels industry. The Trump administration has spent \$1.5 trillion of our money to bail them out

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**"Poor people, people of color and those on fixed incomes are forced to live in crowded conditions and expose themselves, often without protection, at 'essential' jobs like fast food and food delivery. They will therefore die in greater numbers than rich, white people in gated communities"**

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along with the cruise ship lines, airline industry and hotels. Many states have made it a felony to disrupt fossil fuel extraction and transportation. Environmental laws have been

suspended to get the economy moving again.

Financial assistance has also gone to the health insurance companies so they can profit off denying services to people who no longer have insurance due to their recent unemployment. Unemployment letters now come with an ad for buying your own health insurance. 50 million people had filed for unemployment by mid-April. In some states, like Alabama, abortion has been considered elective surgery and is thus effectively banned. Betsy DeVos wants to eliminate full access to an equal education for disabled students. These are some of the many austerity measures that they want to enact to pay for the corporate bailouts that have been cleverly linked to aid for people. No politician will vote against aid for the unemployed and sick in their district even if it's linked to aid for corporations.

COVID-19 is not an equal opportunity pandemic. Poor people, people of color and those on fixed incomes are forced to live in crowded conditions and expose themselves, often without protection, at "essential" jobs like fast food and food delivery. They will therefore die in greater numbers than rich, white people in gated communities.

Milton Friedman, the economist who brought us the great recession of 2008-2009 once said, "Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions taken depend on the ideas that are lying around." So far, the ruling class has used their ideas to make the corporate/fascist state they want. Well, we have ideas, too.

This crisis is the perfect time to enact Medicare for All (Bernie Sanders). We can make housing a human right, more important than the profits of the property owners (Moms-4Housing). Cancel student debt so that these graduates can use their education to make America a better place and not be forced to do the bidding of corporations to pay off their loans (Elizabeth Warren). Enact the original Green New Deal (Green Party) and achieve environmental justice as well as anti-racist, economic justice for all.

Changes are happening swiftly. Will we be victims or agents of change? That's up to us.

Sources: Democracy Now, 3/19/20; The Intercept, 4/7/20; NBC News, 4/7/20; KPFA's Upfront, 4/15/20. 🐦

## **Houseless People...** *from page 1*

and the neighborhood where they live.

Because many of the places where homeless people routinely get food – including most of the food pantries and weekly church meals – have closed, hunger has loomed large. Organizations like Sonoma Applied Village Services (SAVS), Sonoma County Acts of Kindness and The Living Room are working with many volunteers to help. In April, my organization, SAVS alone provided 2,000 hot meals. The Food Bank helps supply all these groups.

What happens next? When Shelter-in-Place is lifted, will local homeless people be kicked out of the SSU dorm and fairground trailers? Will public porta potties and hand wash stations disappear? Will law enforcement drive everyone back into hiding? Or, will our elected officials work to set up tiny home villages where they can find security and safety? 🐦

*Adrienne Lauby is a local homeless activist/advocate. Currently, she is the board president of SAVS, Sonoma Applied Village Services, <https://sonomavillages.org>. Follow this issue on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/humanitycounts>.*

# SHELTER IN A 'PUBLIC' PLACE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Audrianna Jones

It is a trying time for people in so many different ways, to say the least – so many challenges presented that push the furthest edges of our government infrastructure and our minds. During the pandemic I have been upholding my job managing a community kitchen that feeds homeless individuals lunch daily. The normal procedures went through a complete overhaul, with much research and

**“If you want to help during the pandemic, find local movers and shakers and support them in any way you can.”**

collaboration as we continue to keep a large group of individuals safe and fed who are high risk and left to the elements.

This virus has brought out a new kind of accountability where outside exposure means being completely alert to absolutely all contact, because we are responsible for our ability to carry something deadly. It’s a strange combination of bursts of public anxiety potentially dulled with intervals of staying home, if home is an idle and safe environment.

Currently, more than ever before, people left on the streets lack education on how the virus is spread, a structure in which to quarantine safely with proper plumbing and cooking equipment, security to keep any supplies or documents in their possession that benefit them, and basic resources. Shelters have been adapting and moving to more individualistic living, but many shelters come with rules and supervision that some cannot endure.

There are many people putting up tents under the overpasses since there are no parks to reside in. Police are not allowed to move anyone for the time being, which has added a sense of calm due to increasing uninterrupted rest. There are still high-risk people on the streets, but each week adds progress in adding quarantine options and growth in possible emergency shelters for future emergencies.

Yes, it is the city and state’s job to provide housing for the less fortunate during an emergency. But it is also up to the non-profit organizations to take yearly funding and set

up a strong infrastructure of resources that can be expanded on during a time of emergency. It is a non-profit’s job to set the bar for helping people while it adapts and molds to the many changes of modern living. Now more than ever non-profit board members, employees, volunteers and donors have time to combine forces, try, fail, get back up and continue finding ways to help.

Being an essential resource means not only researching safety, it means explaining new CDC discoveries to employees, volunteers, donors and patrons daily. I work with small groups, reaching out before and after meals to share any resources I encounter in my safety research. I reach out to other organizations to inquire how they are adapting and continuing services.

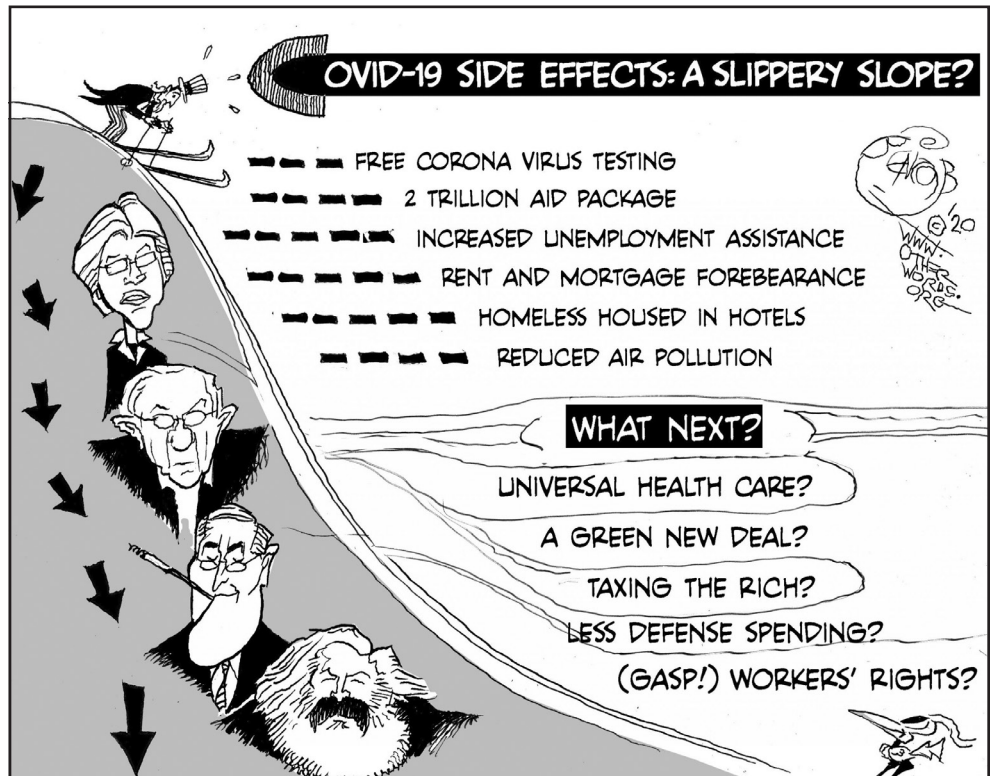
We have become a kitchen and an outlet by modeling respect and being transparent about how much work it takes to continue to provide services. There has been an amazing response and appreciation for a hot meal from almost all patrons. We are blessed with two volunteers that continue to be our saviors dur-

ing emergencies who work most days of the week to help us serve amazing meals.

This is the time to dial in surveys, assess procedures and rules, promote self-care and mental health outlets and model respect in a time of oppression. It is a time to collaborate with other organizations to avoid repeated failures and promote faster growth. We are setting clear boundaries and sharing concerns about the amount of contact and distance we are individually comfortable with.

If you want to help during the pandemic, find local movers and shakers and support them in any way you can. Please find me on social media if you want to see what I help coordinate for the community. No one fully understands the virus so anyone attempting to continue operating should be cheered on.

If you have income to share, look for wish lists and fundraisers on social media or organizational websites. Donate food from cleaned-out pantries, donate handmade masks, reach out to the people you love, but most importantly, do what is best for you and your health. How amazing it is that we can come together – even from far apart – these days. It is time for changes for the low-income population, and it will be ignited by people with passion.



# Moving Forward for an Effective IOLERO

## (Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach)

*Jerry Threat*

The April 4, 2020 tasing and dog mauling of a black man in front of his family in Graton is yet another example of why the community of Sonoma County deserves to have independent, effective civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office. Police dog bites are very serious uses of force that can result in physical damage to the victim and physical disability. The victim of this dog bite by a Sheriff's canine was in the hospital for weeks recovering from this injury.

Independent, effective oversight of the Sheriff would result in multiple types of reviews of this type of incident.

First, there would be a review of whether this use of force was justified in this instance, which would involve analysis of whether this man and woman standing with their hands up and extended as guns were pointed at them presented an actual threat of some kind to the deputies who used this force, whether the deputies actually perceived any such threat and whether their perception was reasonable under the circumstances, and whether any force used was proportionate to any reasonably perceived threat. In addition, the analysis would look at the uses of force by these particular deputies over the course of their career with the Sheriff's Office (and before with other agencies, including reviews of litigation involving these deputies), with special attention to their use of similar force in the past, to determine if they have a pattern and practice of using such force inappropriately. Ultimately, this is an objective analysis that looks at what a "reasonable officer" would have done in that same situation.

Second, there would be a more systemic review of the use of dog bites by our Sheriff's deputies, including how often they occur, where they occur, which deputies in which areas of the county are involved under which supervisors, what training guides the deputies' discretion in using dog bites, what are the demographic data for those deputies who initiate

dog bites and the victims that they use dog bites on, what level of injury typically results from dog bites, etc. This type of overall data analysis would provide important information about the use, prevalence, patterns and harms associated with this type of force. This type of systemic analysis is not currently specifically authorized by the IOLERO Ordinance, nor does the Sheriff allow it, as he denigrates it as "mission creep".

Third, there would be an investigation into what processes and mechanisms exist in the Sheriff's Office to provide an "early warning" about deputies who may use force inappropriately or more often or use more significant force or use it more often than their col-

leagues, and/or more often than officers in comparative departments in other jurisdictions. In addition, this type of review would examine what is in place at our Sheriff's Office and compare that process to well-designed and effective "Early Warning Systems" that exist in other departments, and make recommendations about how to improve the Sheriff's system, assuming they even have one. (My belief is that they do not have any kind of effective early warning system.) This type of systemic analysis by IOLERO of the Sheriff's systems also is not currently authorized or allowed.

Fourth, there would be an examination of the Sheriff's policies and training with regard to use of tasers and use of dog bites (and the threat of using both), including whether dog bites are tracked as a distinct category of use of force, what level of review by supervisors is provided with regard to dog bites,

and what details about these uses of force are required to be reported by a deputy who initiates a dog bite. This information would then be compared to best practices around these types of uses of force across the nation, looking at other departments' policies, requirements in DOJ consent decrees and recommendations from other civilian oversight agencies in this area of policy, practice and training. IOLERO would then take input through its Community Advisory Council from the public. The final product would be a recommendation for improvements in policy and training to the Sheriff's Office

**"Our community deserves an opportunity to vote on strengthening oversight of the sheriff's office. Our board of supervisors should preserve the opportunity for direct democracy by putting this measure on the ballot for a vote."**

regarding such uses of force. The Sheriff's Office has stated for over a year that it does not welcome this type of recommendation and that it believes IOLERO should not be making policy recommendations in the area of use of force.

All of these types of analysis would specifically be authorized for IOLERO under the *Evelyn Cheatham Effective IOLERO Ordinance*.

Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has shut down signature gathering in our county, we now are asking that the board of supervisors place this ordinance on the ballot for a vote of the people.

Our community deserves an opportunity to vote on strengthening oversight of the sheriff's office.

Our board of supervisors should preserve the opportunity for direct democracy by putting this measure on the ballot for a vote.

*Jerry Threat is Former Director of IOLERO.* 🐾



# 72 Years of Occupation Left Palestinians Unprepared for Coronavirus

*Lois Pearlman*

**E**ves before the COVID-19 pandemic, people in the Palestinian territories had enough problems. Many of them live in poverty – with an unemployment rate of nearly 50% in Gaza – and all of them face the possibility of Israeli attack anywhere and any time. Now they have to cope with the novel virus with very little help from their occupier, the state of Israel.

Still, their relative isolation from Israeli society could prove to be a saving grace. So far there are relatively few confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Palestinians, although the fear is that crowded conditions and lack of testing, medical equipment and hospital beds could turn the currently contained disease into a genocide.

The first known cases of COVID-19 in

**“While the coronavirus pandemic has turned the world upside down, at least one thing remains the same – Israeli subjugation of the Palestinian people.”**

Palestine apparently came from contact with a group of Greek pilgrims who had stayed at a Bethlehem hotel. In Gaza, two men who had returned from a visit to Pakistan reportedly brought the first cases into this mostly isolated enclave.

As of April 24 in the Palestinian territories of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 480 people had tested positive for COVID-19 out of 27,000 tests and two people had died. By contrast, 14,882 people had tested positive in Israel and 193 had died. Israel has a population of 9 million people and in the Palestinian territories there are approximately 5 million people.

## Israel's Limited Response

Dealing with its own enormous caseload, Israel has done little to protect people in the territories. As of April 19, according to the anti-occupation Israeli online magazine +972, Palestinians in Shuafat Refugee Camp within the Jerusalem boundaries but on the Palestinian side of the separation wall, were left to care for themselves. Israel had neither established a testing site nor created an isola-

tion zone for those infected with the virus. For workers coming from the West Bank, Israel is refusing to test them for the virus both while they are in Israel and when they leave for home. The Israeli government also fails to monitor the housing and working conditions for the 20,000 Palestinian workers whose jobs in Israel are considered “essential.” Most Israeli employers do not provide medical insurance for their workers and the workers cannot go back to the West Bank for treatment because they are afraid they will lose their jobs. According to the Palestine Authority, 85 workers contracted COVID-19 in Israel as of April 20, and these workers infected 100 more Palestinians when they returned home.

As for Gaza, Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett reportedly decided April 22 to stop processing the territory's coronavirus tests in Israel, so Gaza health officials have begun processing the tests in Gaza. Even so there are a very limited number of COVID-19 tests in Gaza.

But not all Israelis follow their government's lead. A group of Israelis calling themselves “Epidemic in Gaza,” are raising funds for Gaza and petitioning the Israeli government to take responsibility for the territory it has made nearly uninhabitable with an air, sea and land blockade since 2007. Qatar has also been providing aid to Gaza.

While the coronavirus pandemic has turned the world upside down, at least one thing remains the same – Israeli subjugation of the Palestinian people. According to the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem, during the first three weeks of April there were 23 Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank, despite lockdown and social distancing directives aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. This is double the attacks the organization documented in January and in February. Settlers physically attacked Palestinians with clubs, axes, electroshock, stones and assault dogs. They also torched cars, uprooted olive trees and other crops and stole livestock.

Meanwhile the Israeli military has kept up

its own attacks on Palestinians, invading, killing, wounding and arresting several people. In late March they even confiscated food and medical supplies bound for a Palestinian village in the south Jerusalem district. After stealing the trucks the soldiers reportedly distributed the food and medical supplies among themselves.

## Palestinians Are Doing It for Themselves

In the face of Israel's neglect, Palestinians have been gearing up to fight the pandemic on their own. In Gaza, local authorities have closed all wedding halls, restaurants, street markets, schools and mosques. They quarantined the two men returning from abroad, who were their first confirmed coronavirus cases, and have since quarantined 1,270 others in hospitals, hotels and schools.

Because of the ongoing Israeli blockade, which makes it difficult to bring supplies in and out of Gaza, the people have organized to help each other. Volunteers have been bringing food, children's toys and other supplies to those who are stuck in their homes.

“We still have our morals despite all that is happening in Gaza,” said Dr. Mona El-Farra, Director of the Gaza Projects for the Middle East Children's Alliance.

And an unexpected boost to the economy has come from the manufacture of masks, gloves and protective gowns by Gaza's skilled seamstresses for import to Israel and Europe.

In the West Bank, as in Gaza, all the mosques have been closed and people have been instructed to pray at home, even during the holy month of Ramadan, which began April 24. There people have also organized to help each other with volunteer medical teams and security forces, and lowered prices on some basic food items, as well as outright food donations from farmers. At al-Quds University in East Jerusalem researchers have created a computerized model of a ventilator and they say they could manufacture 200 to 500 of them in the first 10 days of production.

As of April 29, with no new COVID-19 patients in two days and no patients in intensive care or on ventilators, both the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza are talking about a gradual return to normal.

Sources include Mondoweiss, Haaretz, If Americans Knew, and a webinar with Mona al-Farra and Mazin Qumsiyeh. ☞



# Hong Kong – The Fragrant Harbor (Part 2)

Grace Cheung-Schulman

(Continued from Apr/May 2020 Peace Press)

So, what caused the 2019-20 anti-government protests in Hong Kong? First, let me tell you a story.

Once there was a little girl whose parents were estranged before she was born. She was

national headline news reported extensively about the pro-democracy protests and violent clashes with police in Hong Kong from June 2019 to early 2020.

That little girl could have been me. Unlike her, I left home and moved to the US before Hong Kong returned to China in 1997. I

Fights between individuals on both sides of the political argument were common; even families and couples were broken up. The city became extremely divided.

In November 2019, protests stopped for a day when citizens went to vote for local district officials. Pro-democracy candidates won 17 out of 18 of the districts, flipping more than half. Pro-Beijing candidates, who had held 300 seats, ended up with only 58. There was a record high turnout with more than 2.9 million people voting (more than 70% of eligible voters) from a city of 7 million. The result is an unequivocal message – rejection of Beijing’s encroachment in Hong Kong affairs and support for democracy.

Then, in January 2020, the coronavirus spread to Hong Kong from China. The anger of Hong Kongers against the government became even more pronounced. Meanwhile, Hong Kong’s economy was sent into a recession due to the protests, the uncertainties of the US-China trade war, and now the coronavirus. On February 26, the Hong Kong government decided to give a one-time cash payment of \$1,284 to each permanent resident of Hong Kong 18 or older in order to stop the slide of the collapsing economy.

The coronavirus pandemic has put a damper on anti-government protests for now. In April, police arrested 15 prominent pro-democracy activists including former lawmaker Martin Lee and media tycoon Jimmy Lai, both pro-democracy leaders I admired most. It is obvious that these arrests were the decision of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing and not that of the Hong Kong government.



Protesters hold a banner during a march, organized by media groups and journalist trade unions, calling for press freedom amidst the ongoing protests in Hong Kong. Ivan Abreu / SOPA Images

brought up by her mother, who, as the head of household, was strict and demanding. Nonetheless, she had a good education, freedom to travel and to speak her mind. She was encouraged to learn about the world, taught to study hard and work hard, be self-reliant and look after herself. She heard rumors that her estranged father was very poor, oppressive, and foreigners looked down on him.

As the years went by, she heard reports that her father became rich and powerful. Then one day, her mother told her that her father wanted to take back the family. It was a shock to everyone. After some tough negotiations, they agreed to delay the return of the family for some years during which her family could carry on the lifestyle they had.

After several years, her father’s power was increasingly felt. The life as she knew it began to erode away. She became fearful and extremely agitated. When her father imposed a rule that she could be arrested if she misbehaved, she rebelled. She marched on the street and protested, joining hundreds of thousands of young people in similar situations like hers.

You all know what happened next. Inter-

watched the development in horror from a distance. I could feel the anger of the protestors.

Unlike the Mainland Chinese, I was brought up under very different values, societal norms, and educational and economic systems. *The dilemma I’m faced with is my inability to reconcile the clash of cultures – capitalism versus communism, democracy versus autocracy, and internationalism versus nationalism.*

A former high school classmate, a retired businesswoman, sent me news from the Hong Kong media. She believes that law and order are paramount for a profitable business environment. A powerful and prosperous China is good for business in Hong Kong. She said, “These young thugs don’t know how prosperous and advanced China is today. As Chinese, we should be proud.” She is on the side of the police and she is not alone. Clashes between protesters and counter-protesters happened every day.

**“The dilemma I’m faced with is my inability to reconcile the clash of cultures—capitalism versus communism, democracy versus autocracy, and internationalism versus nationalism.”**

In spite of the COVID-19 lockdown, the pro-democracy movement continued in online forums and the law courts. July 1, 2020 will be the 23rd anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover to China. Something major may once again happen on the streets of Hong Kong. The story will go on. 🍀

# Save the US Postal Service

Jennie Orvino

A few years ago, my friend who works as a mail carrier clued me in to the fact that the postal service was not supported by taxpayers, but by stamps and mailing services. Yet it is the most trusted of federal agencies, especially by rural residents. If you read Cheryl Strayed's book, *Wild: Lost and Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*, you know that she sent supplies for her journey to small post offices all along the route of her now-famous trek.

I grew up living above a store in the business district of our town. The mail came through a slot in the door, so when I spent the humid Illinois summers at my grandmother's house on the Fox River, "getting the mail" was a new and anticipated ritual. I was an avid letter writer, so putting up the flag on the gray metal box with our address numbers on it was something I did often from June to Labor Day. Today, in the time of coronavirus stay-at-home orders, my trip to my mail box – a black metal box with red signal flag mounted on a post across the street – is something pleasant that breaks up the day.

Even before the flood of "Save the Postal Service" petitions started to arrive in my email, the importance of this service had been on my mind. It began with an article published in *The Bohemian* back in 2013 by

**"Aside from the benefit to our nation's 'haves' to privatize everything from health care to education to water, they have another reason to wish for post office closures: disruption of democracy."**

commentator, author and former Texas commissioner of agriculture Jim Hightower and another by actor Danny Glover, "My parents proudly worked for the US Postal Service. Don't destroy it."

Glover's point is that his family, and many families of color, had a path to the middle class through this institution. He wrote "African Americans have the most to lose from Postal Service cuts and the most to gain from innovative reforms that help the poor, like

postal banking."

The Trump administration's intent is to sell off the postal service to for-profit corporations (to say nothing of Trump wanting to undermine Jeff Bezos and Amazon's relationship



with the USPS, totally out of political revenge for Bezos-owned *Washington Post's* criticism of the orange-faced man himself). A Presidential task force plan to move in that direction calls for privatizing parts of the service, reducing delivery days, closing post offices, and jacking up prices on most package and mail deliveries.

You can read about the reasons the postal service is in trouble in two segments on Democracy Now in an interview with American Postal Workers Union president Mark Dimondstein. Also hear or read why there is such an outcry to prevent the post office's demise, which, without an infusion of money, is predicted to be bankrupt by this summer. Prominent Congress people are demanding support for the Postal Service in the next piece of rescue legislation. (Email cannot deliver our prescriptions!)

Aside from the benefit to our nation's "haves" to privatize everything from health

care to education to water, they have another reason to wish for post office closures: disruption of democracy. During this pandemic, it is bad enough that meat-processing employees (who cannot telecommute) now have

to choose between money for their families and risking COVID-19. Should people be forced to choose between voting in person and risking the disease, as they did in the recent Wisconsin primary (thanks to the Supreme Court)?

There is no reason not to be making extensive preparations to vote by mail in November. Voting machines are more easily hacked than paper ballots, and there is no end to the lies tRump is spewing about the dangers of mail voting. Here's an opinion piece on that from The Hill, "Let's put the vote by mail "fraud" myth to rest."

Read up, sign petitions, call your representatives, and use the post office when you can. I like to quote the governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, who said that this is a time of "we" not "me." Maybe you haven't bought a stamp in years and get all your bills online and paychecks via direct deposit. But this is not the case for many of the "have-nots" in America.

History will measure our greatness by the word we not *me*. 🍀

*After serving in the marketing and development departments of the Santa Rosa Symphony for 11 years, Jennie Orvino is trying to be a retiree, but it isn't working! She is a freelance writer whose work has been seen most recently in North Bay Biz magazine and the weekly North Bay Business Journal.*



# How Censorship Poisons Healthy Inquiry and Democratic Processes

*Barbara Widhalm, Ph.D.*

I have felt very concerned about the level of censorship on YouTube/Facebook I have witnessed and experienced lately. Here's an example: Yesterday, I tried to link the presentation Vitamin C in the Treatment and Prevention of Covid-19, which Dr. Richard Cheng, M.D., Ph.D., gave to the National Institute of Health (NIH) recently. <https://www.brighteon.com/73a61266-4cd1-4e83-bb0c-93ddc2e3811b>

NIH pre-reviewed the presentation and approved it, but YouTube censored it. Linking the same presentation from a different channel, I get an error message that it "violates community standards." Turns out, all Brighteon links are censored now! The reason Dr. Cheng opened a Brighteon channel to begin with, was because he was heavily censored by YouTube, also for "violating community standards."

This is not just an exception. I have documented many pages of censorship recently. This includes interviews with a European immunologist specializing in research integrity and transparency. It includes emergency room physicians sharing on-the-ground data. It includes references to peer-reviewed scientific research, flagged and blocked by Facebook "independent fact-checkers." You are welcome to ask me for references. Here, let me just share some of my feelings and thoughts of why I am deeply appalled and saddened by this development.

I have found that, in order to deepen my understanding of complex interrelationships on this public health challenge, it has benefited me to listen to direct source material from MDs and researchers. As I listen to different voices, my own systemic understanding of the underlying complex interrelationships deepens and broadens. Unfortunately, I have had to more than once hunt down a talk that was deleted by YouTube (for violating "community standards") and then re-posted in another channel, and I have seen multiple "fake news" warnings for research that was, in fact, not fake, where the fact-checkers clearly didn't go to the source to check their facts.

I am very concerned that, by systematically censoring certain information, the public is being deprived of a very important learning opportunity, which also impacts the opportu-

nity for open dialog, inquiry and innovation, and for making informed choices about our health and participating in democratic governance. Without transparency and open information flow, a system gradually decays and collapses. As a teacher, I keep emphasizing to my students that learning requires fostering curiosity, asking questions, and considering multiple sources. How is this possible when censorship on our current public health crisis consistently blocks certain sources and viewpoints from these public forums? As my mentor Fritjof Capra, Ph.D., told me once: "All living systems are learning systems." How can we learn from each other when information is deliberately blacklisted and blocked out?

Book-burning is a very recent part of the traumatic history where I come (Austria), and I can literally feel the alarm bells in my body now. As a professor of systems thinking, I recognize transparency, open information flow, integrity, and mutual accountability, as necessary conditions for any living system to learn, grow, evolve, adapt to challenging circumstances, and become more resilient - and boy, do we need to practice adaptation and resilience skills right now!

I have greatly appreciated Charles Eisenstein's recent discussion on the need for listening deeply across differences of perceptions

right now, and the need for examining our assumptions of what is "truth" or "valid data" or a "qualified authority." I invite you to read his reflection (<https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-conspiracy-myth/>) and to listen to Dr. Vernon Coleman's reflection on censorship (<https://youtu.be/2B8ycnc8PMA>) (who was also censored), while resisting the temptation to label them as being in a "different camp" than yours. I know that when I feel strongly about something, my tendency to prematurely dismiss certain views that may not match my assumptions about what is "true" or "valid," is heightened, and my heart-mind closes to the possibility of learning and growing.

It still is my hope that we can be a learning forest together during this time—that we can grow and learn together from both what is decaying and what is sprouting in a nourishing soil of inquiry, inviting the nutrients of curiosity, an open mind, and an open heart, without the poisonous toxins of censorship. Here's to the vision that the toxins of censorship and power games be removed, so that we can all flourish in this forest and co-create new possibilities together! 🌱

*Barbara Widhalm, Ph.D. is a faculty member of Bachelors of Leadership, Masters of Leadership and Doctorate of Educational Leadership Programs at Kalmanovitz School of Education and St. Mary's College of California.*



# poetry page

## Journey With Me

Don't expect, be surprised.  
 Live life one breath at a time.  
 Slow down, be unafraid.  
 No matter what you have or  
 Who you are you will face death.  
 Prepare  
 Laugh and cry. Eat and sleep.  
 Dance fast, Dance slowly,  
 Dance like you did know,  
 Dance like you don't know.  
 Dance  
 Be in the moment, be the moment.  
 Stop sometimes.  
 Rest and trust, Trust yourself.  
 Trust others  
 Know yourself, know others,  
 Be yourself, Let others be themselves,  
 These are simple truths.  
 Love  
 Love food, love water,  
 Take time to love, appreciate your kitchen sink.  
 Love simple pleasures each and every day,  
 Notice the beauty of the flowers you pass along the way.  
 Love laughter, love rain,  
 Learn to love and bless the pain.  
 Know  
 With eyes wide open seeing and disbelieving,  
 Yet believing it will all come to pass.  
 Learn to need, learn to give,  
 Learn to receive.  
 We are all of our mother earth; we are all from the one.

*Elaine B. Holtz*

## Standstill

Stand Still  
 Everything just came to a  
 Standstill.

What is Humanities' Will?

Stand Still  
 Listen to the Birds shrill.

Life as we know it  
 has come to a  
 Standstill.

This is not a drill.

*Shekeyna Black*

## Pissed!

I'm not jealous  
 of the rich. I'm pissed!  
 that they take  
 and take and take...  
 the best of everything  
 and use the world  
 as their playground  
 and battlefield

while countless millions  
 of innocent children,  
 struggling parents and  
 relations die in misery  
 from hunger and disease...  
 without shelter and care,  
 their hopes stolen by

greed and ongoing war  
 on the masses made poor  
 by racist supremacist  
 killers and thieves  
 on this planet with plenty  
 for everyone's need.

Do we tell the children  
 that's just the way it is?!  
 or do we organize to  
 do something about it?

*Attila Nagy*



# A Dark Wood

*e.g. singer*

In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself, in a dark wood, where the direct way was lost. It is a hard thing to speak of, how wild, harsh and impenetrable that wood was, so that thinking of it recreates the fear.

– Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*

It is indeed a dark wood we find ourselves in at this moment in history, and the despair and fear of being in exile – as Dante experienced from his own homeland – is now a worldwide pandemic. “The direct way” being lost in the present. What we are doing is literally fighting for our collective lives with our last breaths! We are slogging through a marathon against an opponent that has been trained in the 100 meter dash.

Walking through my empty downtown, masked up, I think, “Oh, so this is what it feels like to be under an occupation.” An occupation not led by men and weapons, but by microscopic droplets – the invisible armies of the night – that have crept in behind our lines, overrun and outflanked us. It is germ warfare laying waste to the fragile infrastructure we in America have taken for granted and ignored for so long. An infrastructure that more than ever reveals the social and economic disparities of our nation; the shiny veneer cracked open, once again. And the end of innocence, seen once again.

Other countries, whose citizens have experienced military occupations and deaths of its people in their own homeland is a far off event to Americans. Of course, tragic events are no stranger to us. We have suffered on our own soil, but not often: the Civil War, 1861-65, the Flu Pandemic of 1918, the Great Depression of 1929-39, the Polio Epidemic of the 1950’s, 9/11, and the Great Recession in 2008. But for many Americans, those events are experienced through the history books read in the present – not the reality lived.

The thoughts and behaviors of our being an entitled and privileged populace has led to an arrogance of power – the myth of invulnerability. But we are vulnerable, and we are human. We are now, in the words of singer and songwriter, Sting, finally realizing, “How Fragile We Are,” not only as Americans, but also as a human race.

We are in a world war, but not a war to be fought against political philosophies and physical adversaries, with faces and flesh, that traditional weapons would kill! It is a war that must be waged against a viral enemy with all that modern medicine has at its disposal that would heal! We have had wars, fires, floods and ongoing plagues worldwide, from time immemorial – nothing new. All civilizations have been the recipients and “victims” of these occurrences.

Now, as never before, as the song title states: “We Are The World.” Yes, we are surely that now! First person, plural! Not us vs. them anymore! We are humanly, virally linked!

We will get through this, but it will take time. The task will be arduous. There will continue to be great suffering. We will carry these wounds, now and into the future in countless ways. We will endure! We will find the cure for this dreaded disease. This is our time to rise above and show what we are really capable of as a nation: not just to cure, but to truly heal us.

Postscript: Dante Alighieri died in exile at age 56 from malaria, never being allowed back to his home. It was in those exiled years that he wrote *La Commedia*, later renamed by Giovanni Boccaccio, *La Commedia Divina*, or *The Divine Comedy*, considered his masterpiece in literature. 🍀

*e.g. singer is a photographer and writer who has lived in Sonoma County for 50 years.*

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a spectator sport!*

# Sonoma County Social Justice Groups

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**350 Sonoma County** – Engaging our community in the work of 350.org to solve the climate crisis. 350sonomacounty.org

**ACLU Sonoma Co.**, working to preserve individual working rights and liberties. Meets each second Monday. Contact patriciamorandi@sbcglobal.net, or davhen@sonic.net.

**Allies Safety Network** – compiling a phone chain/helpline to build a safety network for those at risk of harassment to provide a supportive presence in situations of hateful threats. Join the Network Call List: 583-9168

**Alternatives to Violence** – Presents experiential workshops in personal growth in the community and prisons. 545-1798

**Comité VIDA** – Defends the human and civil rights of immigrants. 523-1740, cirsc@yahoo.com,

**Daily Acts** – Offers sustainable solutions rooted in the power of inspired daily actions. 789-9664, dailyacts.org

**Fukushima Response** – works to inform about the Fukushima melt downs, monitor the consequences, advocate for the shut down of Diablo Canyon. fukushimaresponse.org. 823-9203

**Green Party of Sonoma County** – sonomagreenparty.org

**Green Sangha** – Spiritually engaged environmental action. info@greensangha.org

**HPEACE** – Health Professionals for Equality and Community Empowerment. hpeacesonomacounty.wordpress.com

**Healdsburg Peace Project** – Peace and social justice action group, Healdsburg. 431-1129, healdsburgpeaceproject.org

**Hate Free Petaluma** Progressive organization. www.facebook.com/hatefreepetaluma/

**Homeless Action** – Advocating for people without shelter. 795-2890

**Indivisible Goups** – All the groups are on Facebook.

**Indivisible Sonoma County:** indivisiblesoco.com  
**Indivisible Petaluma:** indivisiblepetaluma@gmail.com, or follow on Twitter at @IndivisibleLuma

**Indivisible Sebastopol:** indivisible.wsc@gmail.com

**Indivisible Healdsburg**

**Indivisible Windsor**

**LezResist!** was formed to be a visible and unified Lesbian presence in support of each other, and to stand in solidarity with the many communities, causes, and policies under attack by the current U.S. administration. Info @ at LezResist@gmail.com.

**Listening for a Change** – Programs support listening and oral history to create a caring community. 578-5420, listeningforachange.org

**MEChA de Sonoma** – Student group that focuses on issues affecting the Chicano/Latino community. info@mechadesonoma.org

**Metta Center for Nonviolence** – Works to promote nonviolence worldwide and to build a nonviolent culture. 774-6299

**MOVES-Minimizing Occurrences of Violence in Everyday Society** – Stresses nonviolence as the answer to society's violence. 524-1900

**NAACP - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** – Seeks to eliminate racial hatred, racial profiling and discrimination. 332-1573

**National Women's History Project** – coordinates observances of Women's History month around the country. 636-2888, nwhp@aol.com

**North Bay Jobs with Justice** – organized for better conditions and a living wage for workers. Email: northbayjobswithjustice@gmail.com, Website: northbayjobswithjustice.org, Facebook, North Bay Jobs With Justice Ph: 346-1187

**North Bay Organizing Project** – a regional faith and values based peoples' organization. 318-2818

**North Coast Coalition for Palestine** – Brings greater awareness to the plight of the Palestinian people and works to end US military support for Israel. 575-8902. www.nccpal.org or find us on Facebook.

**NOW of Sonoma County** – local chapter of the National Organization for Women. 545-5036

**Occupy Sonoma County** – Embraces the egalitarian, deep democracy principles of the Occupy Movement with a regional strategy for effectively organizing county-wide social justice campaigns that are globally relevant. 877-6650, OccupySonomaCounty.org

**Organizing for Action:** Progressive organizing project. Contact Linda Hemenway: whatisworking@gmail.com or 707-843-6110 and Facebook

**Peace Alliance** – Mission is to campaign for a cabinet-level US Department of Peace. 838-8647, maggik3@sonic.net, thepeacealliance.org

**Peace Roots Alliance** – We seek to create a peaceful, just and sustainable world for future generations. 765-0196, Linda@peaceroots.org

**Petaluma Blacks for Community Development** – facebook.com/pb4cd

**Petaluma Progressives** – Grassroots, political education and action group. Producers of the Progressive Festival. 763-8134, info@progressivefestival.org

**Praxis Peace Institute** – Peace Education organization, 939-2973, praxispeace.org

**Progressive Sonoma** – Peaceful Resistance Network. An umbrella association to network Sonoma's local progressive action groups. peacefulresistance9.wixsite.com/progressivesonoma. Facebook at Peaceful Resistance Sonoma

**Project Censored/Media Freedom Foundation** – Publishes the top 25 most censored news stories each year. 874-2695, Peter@projectcensored.org, Mickey@projectcensored.org. projectcensored.org.

**Racial Justice Allies** – Developing anti-racist practices among white social justice activists. 795-2890 racialjusticeallies@gmail.com, www.racialjusticeallies.org

**Sonoma County Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP).** In support of single payer health insurance. 763-1925. sngold@juno.com. www.pnhpca.org.

**Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCo CAN!)** Groups and individuals working address and reverse climate change. Meet in months with a 5th Monday, 7-9 PM at the PJC. Info: 595-0320 or SonomaCounty-CAN@gmail.com (email preferred).

**Sonoma County Coastal Hills:** gardens@mcn.org

**Sonoma County Nonviolence Training Collective** offers free trainings in methods and principles for progressive social change and peace. soconvtc@gmail.com.

**Sonoma County Resistance** via change.org

**Sonoma Solidarity with Standing Rock** – Supporting indigenous rights and fossil fuel resistance. SonomaSolidarity.org, Facebook: Sonoma Solidarity with Standing Rock. 792-4422.

**Sonoma Valley Peace & Justice** – Peace and social justice group for Sonoma Valley. audreyvh@sbcglobal.net

**Sonoma County Black Forum:** Our mission is to lead, serve, and thrive, by promoting positive community and youth engagement events. Monthly meetings. sonomacounty-blackforum@gmail.com

**SURJ (Showing Up For Racial Justice, Sonoma County)** – facebook.com/SURJSonomaCounty

**United Farm Workers** – 1700 Corby Ave., Santa Rosa 528-3039

**United Nations Association** – Builds public understanding and support for the United Nations. Facebook

**Veterans for Peace** – Organization of vets working together for peace and justice through nonviolence. 536-6002

**Women in Black** – Women who stand in silent vigil to protest war and human rights abuses.

**Women's Justice Center** – Advocacy for victims of rape, domestic violence, and child abuse, particularly in the Latina community. 575-3150, justicewomen.com

*Please email zenekar@comcast.net  
for additions or changes to this list.*



No meetings will be held  
at the Peace & Justice Center  
until further notice.

To receive the  
PJC weekly  
email calendar,  
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- ◆ Joining the *Peace Press* Collective
- ◆ Helping to maintain and expand our social media
- ◆ Assisting at Center Events
- ◆ Helping with grant writing
- ◆ Fundraising or Donating to the Center
- ◆ Sponsoring our bi-monthly Peace Press Newsletter

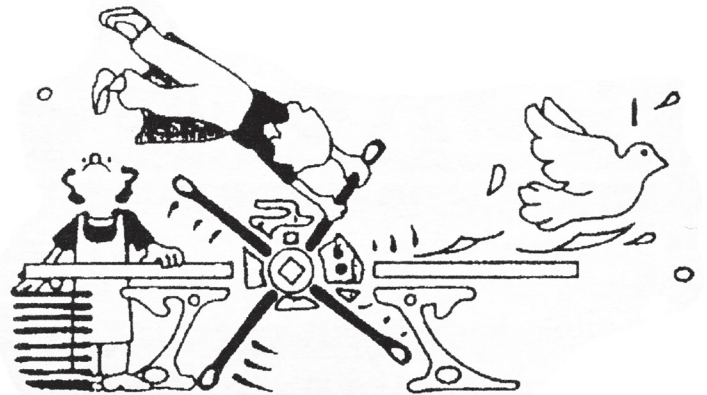
Please call (707) 575-8902 or visit [PJCso.co.org](http://PJCso.co.org)

## PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER OF SONOMA COUNTY

467 Sebastopol Ave.  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
(707) 575.8902

peacentr@sonic.net  
PJCso.co.org

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
HOURS: Mon-Fri 1-4PM



## JOIN THE PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER OF SONOMA COUNTY

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**Annual Membership Dues, tax deductible (includes the bimonthly *Peace Press* mailed to your address for one year).**

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Return by mail or fax to Peace & Justice Center. Thank you for your membership! Visit [PJCso.co.org](http://PJCso.co.org) for activities and hours.