

# The Peace Memo

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## RESTLESS SPRING

*Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.  
(Taken from The Hymnal, 1982, ©1982  
The Church Pension Fund. Hymn no. 204)*

Easter is behind us; the world, in the northern hemisphere where I reside, burgeons with new life. In Europe, France and Greece may very well have elected leftist leaders by the time you read this. If that happens, “Mercozy Austerity” may be up for serious review.

In the U.S., the Occupy movement is renewing protests and demonstrations; the countervailing force of the police state likewise prepares for action. U.S media distracts us with the endless presidential campaign from the increasing number of our citizens who lack access to jobs, housing, medical care, food, and education.

It could be a long, hot summer. It could incubate tremendous growth, as well.

Here in Knoxville, May begins with the Second Annual Conference on Violence in Knoxville. We've had trouble scheduling around conflicts, in this busy time of year, but early May it is. If you miss the conference itself, we'll try to get a report out right away. This issue looks different because we're still having technology difficulties and we felt it was more important to publish and move on than to muck about with formatting any more. Read, enjoy, and let us know how you like this look.

## WHAT IS ECONOMIC JUSTICE?

*(Guest contributor Bob Rundle continues his examination of economic justice and building a just society. -Ed.)*

David Korten's proposes a very useful model for economic justice in his book Agenda for a New Economy (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). This report summarizes his thinking on pages 23 and 24:

*Climate chaos, the end of cheap oil, collapsing fisheries, dead rivers, falling water tables, terrorism, genocidal wars, financial collapse, species extinction, thirty thousand child deaths daily from poverty – and, in the richest country, millions squeezed out of the middle class – are all evidence of the monumental failure of our existing cultural stories and the institutions to which they give rise.*

*At first, each of the many disasters that confront us appears distinct. In fact, they all have a common origin that our feeble “solutions “ fail to address for lack of an adequate theory”. He notes on p.15 the fable about the number of babies floating down stream that required a continuous rescue operation. But no one looked upstream to find how they were getting in the water. Our “solutions” to our troubles often reflect this approach. They fail to address the underlying causes stemming from*

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*our economic institutions. Hence nothing much changes. Korten's book lays out a theory (what he terms a "big picture story") of where we went wrong in the design of our economy and what we can do about it. He presents a strong case that we have the capacity "to create an economic system that takes life as its defining value."*

Economic justice is based on a just economic system. Korten defines six criteria for such a system:

- 1. Provide every person with the opportunity for a healthy, dignified, and fulfilling life;*
- 2. Restore and maintain the vitality of Earth's natural systems;*
- 3. Nurture the relationships of strong, caring communities;*
- 4. Encourage economic cooperation in service to the public interest and democratically determined priorities;*
- 5. Allocate resources equitably to socially and environmentally beneficial uses; and*
- 6. Root economic power in people- and place-based communities to support the democratic ideal of one-person, one-vote citizen sovereignty.*

Korten summarizes our plight this way: "To create an economic system that works for all, we need a different design grounded in different values and a different understanding of wealth, our human nature, and the sources of human happiness and well-being." His book spells out his views on these issues and suggests ways to create change. It seems ironic that his proposal for replacing our failed capitalist economy with a new real-wealth, local economy reflects much more the entrepreneurial model of Adam Smith, the 18<sup>th</sup> century economist.

Bob Rundle

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## **DRAWING BACK FROM THE EDGE OF A CLIFF**

*Excerpted from an article by Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, Inquiring Mind, Spring 2012, p.21*

*About the author: Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi has been a Theravada Buddhist monk for over thirty-five years. A translator of the Pali Nikayas, he lives and teaches at Chuang Yen Monastery in Carmel, New York, and at Bodhi Monastery in Lafayette, New Jersey. He is the founder and chairman of Buddhist Global Relief.*

The 1960s cartoon series, Road Runner, featured a regular scenario in which the villain, Wile E. Coyote, pursues the protagonist, Road Runner, toward the edge of a cliff. Road Runner ducks under a slab of stone jutting out from the cliff, but Coyote keeps running until he overshoots the edge. Suddenly he pauses, looks down and realizes there's nothing supporting him. Then BAM! he plunges to a crash landing.

This sequence can be read—almost but not quite—as a metaphor for the current crisis of global warming.

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As we keep running in blind pursuit of economic growth, we draw ever closer to the edge of the cliff, our planet's finite sustaining capacity. The question is, Will we draw back before it's too late, or will we, like Coyote, overshoot the cliff, a victim of our own excesses?

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Now, when ninety-seven percent of climate scientists trace global warming to our dependence on fossil fuels, one would think the corporate titans and their cohorts would heed their warnings. After all, these people don't live on Mars but here on Earth, and thus their policies are undermining the very planet on which their own survival depends. Do they really want to live on a planet that's been pillaged, ravaged and wasted? Is this what they want to leave to their children and grandchildren?

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Change must occur at three levels: the immediate, the long-term pragmatic and the systemic. Immediate changes naturally come first, and they must come fast. We must learn about the major issues, support responsible environmental organizations, and promote legislation to curb the destructive impact fossil fuels are having on our water, food, soil, air and health. Long-term pragmatic measures include climate mitigation and adaptation, especially a rapid transition to renewable sources of energy. However, we also need to break the grip corporations have on U.S. politics so that our government will be responsive to the well-being of people rather than to corporate demands.

Even such pragmatic changes, though, are insufficient. We need broader systemic changes, including changes in consciousness itself, and this is where the Dharma becomes relevant. Our current economic and social model is built on a fiction: the assumption that happiness is to be won by extracting the living riches of the earth and turning them into lifeless commodities. Such a project fosters a culture of death governed by two vicious practices. First, our corporate economy objectifies human beings, treating them as mere consumers or as workers to be exploited for what they are worth and then cast aside. And then it commodifies the natural world, devaluing its inherent goodness for the sake of producing goods. Buddhism offers us an alternative scheme of values, which teaches us that true happiness cannot be won by gratifying the impulses of craving but by living a life rich in purpose and replete with meaning. While we need adequate material security, the springs of happiness lie beyond the material: in more intimate spiritual contact with the roots of our being, in family and friendship, in collaborative communities, in artistic creativity, in appreciation of the grandeur of nature, and in the cultivation of our spiritual faculties. Happiness flows from generosity, virtue, wisdom and love.

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To drawback from the edge of the cliff and avoid the crash that follows, what we need most is a clear, honest understanding of our predicament and an ethic grounded in humility, compassion and a sense of global stewardship. We also need a worldview — a metaphysic, if you will — that ascribes intrinsic value to people, other beings and the natural world, affirming their right to exist without being sacrificed on the altar of material gain. If our moral trajectory does not bend to meet the demand of sustainability, eventually we'll share Coyote's fate: we'll shoot past the edge and crash. If we bend to meet the demand,

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we can draw back and emerge intact.

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*May we (and all sentient beings) be free of danger and harm  
And peaceful of heart and mind  
May we be strong in body and spirit  
And may we live with ease.*

## WAR MAKES VICTIMS OF US ALL

By admin, excerpted from the LA Progressive

Jack Finley is a peace activist who some call a peace champion. He works tirelessly to support peace candidates opening his home for precinct walking and phone banking to mobilize residents of his community to oppose the US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Jack was recently named "Peacemaker of the Year" by the San Pedro Neighbors for Peace and Justice. This was his acceptance speech.

A young U.S. Air force pilot sits at a computer screen watching two pickup trucks winding their way down a mountain road ten thousand miles away. A decision is made by three other people observing the trucks that there are terrorists in the trucks and they must be destroyed. The young pilot pushes a button and in a few seconds two guided missiles from the Reaper [Drone](#) flying five miles above the mountain destroys the two vehicles in a large fireball.

An extended family of 21 and a happy bride-to-be are instantly incinerated. This leaves only one son alive for this family. He had gone ahead earlier to make arrangements for his family who were going to attend his wedding in one week's time. His intended bride was riding in one of the trucks that had been borrowed from a family friend.

Two weeks later, after the details of the event became known around the world, where thousands of people gathered to protest the accidental killing on the mountain side, the young pilot who had pushed the button stopped at his favorite bar, on the way home from work to be with his wife and two young daughters. He had a few drinks and a short time later left the bar and drove his motorcycle down the dark desert road at high speed and crashed into a parked, highway repair truck.

The Highway Patrol officer interviewed at the scene estimated that the motorcycle was going in excess of 100 miles per hour at the point of impact. What remained of his body was found 200 feet from the original point of contact.

War affects people in many ways. The intended bridegroom becomes a militant Islamic resistance warrior who kills 20 of the foreign infidels wearing an explosive vest. The pilot could not live with what he had done as he would have been forced to continue his daily remote killing on the following day.

The pilot's death was determined to be accidental and his family would be able to survive at least

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economically with his military death benefit and his additional life insurance. The bridegroom was honored throughout the Islamic world as a saint. It is a sad story about the effects of war, where almost everybody becomes a victim.

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Think of America today as a worn out patch of weeds, a vacant lot choking on pollution, close to being unable to spring back to life. Obama has been able to effect some changes to the patch, but not nearly enough to satisfy most of us. We feel betrayed that he put some of the people who poisoned the garden in charge of revitalizing it. These experts were playing with old rules that worked badly before and now were supposed to magically do the job. It's like trying to spread Democracy or saving the hearts and minds of strangers by killing them.

Our country is in crisis. We still need a [Single Payer](#) Health plan. Medicare is threatened. Our schools and our country's infrastructure are failing. The arrogance of the wealthy and their wannabes look with loathing and contempt on those less fortunate than themselves. We are frustrated that we were sold out, and had to go begging from an obstructionist opposition. We have a Congress that is mostly subservient to the moneyed class who are the main recipients of the spoils of war. We have a Supreme Court that protects our [Military Industrial Complex](#); the media has become complicit as the corporations that own them spew propaganda as news.

Over the past 200 years, our country has been on a quest to build an empire. Our military has been engaged in over 20 major wars during this period and that does not include the many smaller interventions undertaken worldwide but mostly unknown by our own citizens. The U.S. today has over 600 military bases scattered across this world in over 100 countries. The United States with NATO has replaced the United Nations as the world's peacekeeper and now justifies our never-ending preemptive wars under the guise of nation building to spread Democracy.

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This country has yet to admit that Vietnam was a horrible mistake. The ravages of Agent Orange and the scattered and still lethal land mines continue today to maim and kill innocent children and this will continue on into the future. Depleted uranium has poisoned thousands of people world wide including many of our own troops. More U.S. military personnel, both on active duty and discharged veterans are committing suicide than ever before.

Most of the rest of our planet's inhabitants have learned to see behind our Empire's curtain and I hope and feel that there is a new generation of young people that will reject the Empire and find other ways and means to build a better, more cooperative world. There are "Winds of Peace and Independence" flowing from various parts of the world. This week, for example, thousands of caring people have gathered across this country demanding justice for a seventeen-year-old boy killed by a wannabe cop in Florida where a "Stand Your Ground" law justifies the taking of human life because all a person has to say is he felt he was being threatened.

Social media today can and will spread vital information in milliseconds to young people everywhere in

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the world where there is opposition to the people's needs in contrast to controlled governmental propaganda. The Occupy movement may be a starting point here and now if it can maintain non-violent direct action that is not taken over by violent elements. This has happened many times before by the infiltration of government agents provocateurs. When that happens it will result in retaliation by the well-trained police and domestic military forces equipped with the latest crowd dispersal weapons. We have seen this here in Los Angeles when rage over injustice turns into violent mob behavior that is suppressed with overwhelming retaliatory police action that is supported by the establishment.

Violence never brings lasting peace as we have seen recently being repeated in Africa and the Middle East.

It may have to get much worse before it gets better. My favorite quotation of Dr. King's many eloquent observations is, "A person who has nothing worth dying for has nothing worth living for". He also said, "An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

## THE SPARROW SINGS

I was arrested in Gesu church on Good Friday trying to explain to those entering the church that we as Christians must practice the nonviolence shown to us by Christ during His passion and not promote and encourage our young to train for and fight in wars. Gesu is the Jesuit parish connected with Marquette University, which sponsors the ROTC and promotes the U.S. military and its wars. I was issued a citation for trespassing on private property. On April 24, the day when in 1965 20,000 Marines invaded the Dominican Republic, Roberta and I were arrested with 5 other people at Volk Field, the Camp Williams National Guard Base, where soldiers are trained to operate the killer unmanned robot drones used in Afghanistan, Yemen and other places where people are indiscriminately killed in violation of international law. We intended to deliver a message to Lt. Ebben of the Base asking that they discontinue the training and work for peace through nonviolent means. Immediately when we went through the front gates we were taken away and issued citations at the Maustin County Jail for disorderly conduct. The "disorderly conduct" was walking onto the base with our signs and pictures of the victims of the drone warfare. We are often asked whether our getting arrested makes any difference. I repeat what Ammon Hennessy and A.J. Muste said when asked this question. I do it not necessarily to change others but that I will not be changed by them. Since we live in a society that believes and teaches that violence is the answer to bringing peace it is easy to think and act along those lines. We must constantly remind ourselves of the truth and the message of Christ that we are called to act nonviolently at all times. Only love overcomes evil, and one cannot love and kill at the same time.

I am disappointed that Messmer H.S., a Catholic school where I once taught religion, is considering signing a contract with the U.S. military to be a JROTC high school next year. We have much work to do to save our youth from being trained to do violence to their neighbors. -----Don Timmerman



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“Being holy...does not mean being perfect but being whole. It does not mean being exceptionally religious or being religious at all. It means being liberated from religiosity and religious pietism of any sort.....being truly human.”--William Stringfellow

NOTES FROM 21ST ST.: This morning the weather was chilly with cloudy skies. I was busy with household chores all morning, cleaning the bathroom, doing small repairs in one of our bedrooms, making lunch, etc. After lunch, I noticed the sun had appeared, and rain was no longer a threat. Even though there was more work to be done in the house, I suggested to Don that we go for a walk to the library. When we neared the downtown library I was awe struck by a beautiful, flowering tree. It was packed with white blossoms tinged with pink. It was glorious as I looked up into the flowering branches against the brilliant blue sky. Don heard me telling the tree how beautiful it was and asked what in the world I was doing. I turned to him and said I was doing the first really sane thing for the day. May you also have time to do one sane thing a day.

Peace, Roberta

## NOTEWORTHY

[I recommend Chris Hedges' article about retired Episcopal Bishop George Packard:](#)

"I violated the commandment 'Thou Shalt Not Kill,' " he said. "Nothing will be gained by intellectualizing this. I killed other people. I took lives. It was exactly that. I became in Vietnam a professional killer. I was proud of what I could do. There are days when I meet with people, trying to do what is good for the church, for others, and think I am probably the only person here who has killed another human being."

## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PIET will meet at our regular time (2-3pm) on the Second Sunday of May (May 13th) to make our first study/discussion group book selection. I have created a Facebook Event for this meeting, as I do with all PI and PIET events. Please feel free to Like our Facebook Page (here: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Peacebuilding-Institute-of-East-Tennessee/387678857909414>) to stay updated on what we're doing. All events are "Public," and you can access THIS event here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/282757131813666/>.

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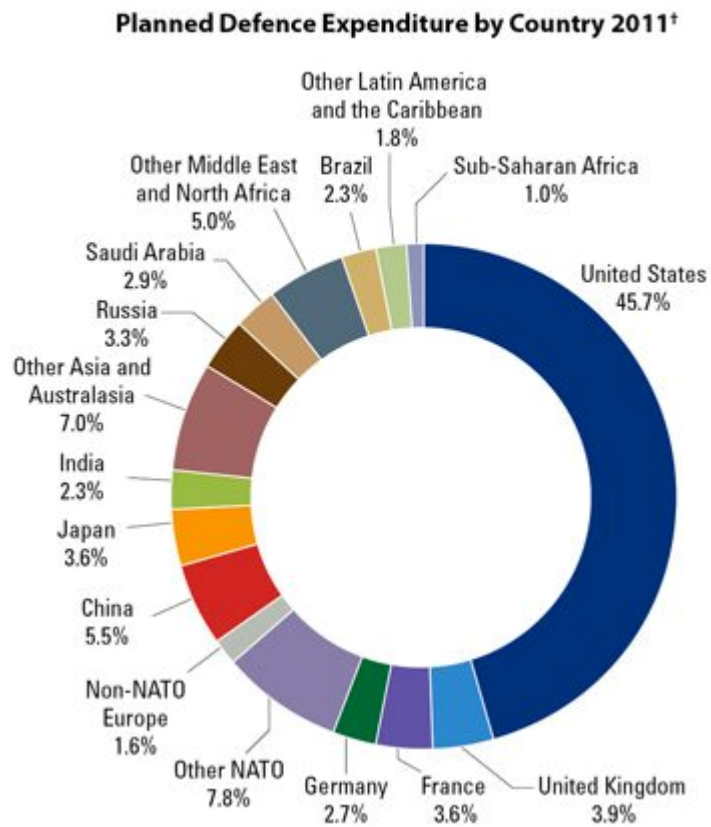
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The United States spends almost as much as the rest of the world combined! Now imagine if we spent this money on hiring better teachers. Or providing cost-free health care. Or expanding our libraries. Or . . .



*[Found on the website of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Submitted to Daily Share by Brandon W.](#)*