

# The Peace Memo

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January, 2013

## Another Chance

I don't know about you, but I'm feeling overwhelmed and whipsawed as this year begins. Holidays mean family and travel, with attendant stresses. (Including a bout with bedbugs. I won. 'Nuff said.) As if that wasn't enough, this holiday season has brought [conflicts popping out all over Africa](#) and [armed sociopaths targeting children in the U.S.](#) Economic structural adjustment programs, renamed "[Austerity](#)" and touted as the only solution to worldwide economic collapse, continue to be forced onto countries – meaning: workers – worldwide, even as [compelling evidence](#) demonstrates that they don't work.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, for several months, I've been researching food and violence. What I thought would be fairly straight-forward turns out to be huge and unwieldy. Look at two forms of violence mentioned above: war and "austerity". War makes refugees, destroys crops, poisons land and water. Austerity kills jobs, displaces workers, lowers living standards and, therefore, demand, even for food. Add in climate change, industrial farming, unsafe extraction methods, and land lost to development and you begin to see the scope; violence in food production touches everyone.

After trying for several weeks to wrap my mind around all this and focus on one facet we might look at constructively, I admit defeat. We shall address these important topics in future issues but not, perhaps, as one monolithic topic.

We would love to hear what **you** have to say. Send articles, comments, insights, news – especially of things that DO work – to give depth and perspective to the discussion. I especially invite our overseas readers and friends to

contribute. We in the U.S. feel increasingly isolated from our brothers and sisters.

So this issue will stay close to home. It will update you on PIET's transition process, with contributions from our Executive Director, Carrie Mays San Angelo and SAGE's Bob Rundle. We hope to engage more of you to participate in ways that suit you. Come to our next meeting – second Sundays at [Church of the Savior](#), Weisgarber Road, Knoxville – they are short and to the point. We have moved our publication date from the first of the month to after the meeting, to facilitate your contribution and improve communication.

Contribute in other groups and let us know about it so we may add your news to this publication. Write articles, submit artwork, suggest topics for discussion or research. Request access to our DropBox to make it easy to send things. Connect with us on [FaceBook](#) and [Twitter](#).

“Another fresh new year is here . . .

Another year to live!  
To banish worry, doubt, and fear,  
To love and laugh and give!

This bright new year is given me  
To live each day with zest . . .  
To daily grow and try to be  
My highest and my best!

I have the opportunity  
Once more to right some wrongs,  
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,  
And sing more joyful songs!”

~ [William Arthur Ward quotes](#) ([American](#) dedicated scholar, author, editor, pastor and teacher)

<sup>1</sup> I've selected one article from many. Just google “austerity doesn't work” to find opinions from NPR [Rolling Stone](#).

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## Summary of PIET Meeting Minutes

We began the meeting with a report of 2012's activities and increased attendance at monthly meetings, but all topics on the agenda were discussed with some additional notes below.

Since assuming the director's role in March, there has been some confusion/blurring of what is exclusively PIET and what is the Peacebuilding Institute (PI). In keeping with that recent trend, this meeting had both PI and PIET topics. Essentially PI is an online networking service; however to keep our group from becoming one in name only, we need to highlight recent activities. Such recent activities would be from groups like PIET, thus showing the importance of affiliates being active, and also providing reasoning for such blurriness when it comes to PI and PIET.

The Role of Affiliates: Ask affiliates for an update no later than the end of April, 2013. Those affiliates providing updates will have their updates displayed on the Affiliates tab of the website. Those affiliates not responding will be moved over to the "Links" portion of the website.

On making changes:

- Share on Google Documents
- Make a Google Calendar that we can all access.
- Use the Highland Center as a resource.
- Find a way to be involved with the Secret City Festival, (e.g., ways to use nuclear energy for peace instead of war).

On Fundraising:

- Setting up a Paypal account and linking it to the webpage for donations.
- At events in which we provide a service, have a donation basket set up with suggested donations per the type of service.
- Getting back on the Second Mile giving. (This

is a Church of the Savior program.)

- NOTE: We need to be clear with people that we are NOT a 501c3 non-profit organization. Donations will NOT be tax deductible.

Ways to be visible at peace events:

- T-Shirts/Hoodies/Clothing Items

**Reminder: PIET meets on the Second Sunday of each month, from 2-3 PM, in Shalom House at Church of the Savior, Knoxville. Please come!**

## Calendar of Events [Draft]

The following are suggestions for ways that PIET can be active in our local community while also growing together and outward as an organization. Suggestions are certainly appreciated.

### February

- Feb. 10 @ 2:00pm: Regular PIET meeting.
- Meeting Suggestion: Valentine's Day theme, or focused on cultivating peaceful relationships.

### March

- March 10 @ 2:00pm: Regular PIET meeting.
- Meeting Suggestion: Suggest & select study materials for Spring Retreat Day; plan Retreat Day events.

### April

- April 14 @ 2:00pm: Regular PIET Meeting- Planning for Spring Retreat

**Let's have a Spring Retreat day in late April (Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup> or Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>). We'll gather for a day of meditation, study, reflection, and a celebration of peace in the musical and visual arts.**

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*The following article provides an introduction to current work of the Institute for Spirituality and Global Economics ([SAGE](#)). Links to all their articles, and to many other resources are available on their web page. --Ed.*

## THOUGHTS ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### WHAT IS IT?- WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

David Korten's view in his book *Agenda for a New Economy* (Berrett-Koehler, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2010) is crucial to understanding these questions. Here is a summary of his thinking. (cf. pp. 23-24)

“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”. The origin is our economy. Korten notes on page 15 a 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 into the water. Our attempts to solve to our troubles often reflect this approach. They fail to address the upstream causes stemming from our economic institutions,

partly due to all the effort and resources needed for immediate rescue operations. Hence fundamental change is minimal.

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;
6. Root economic power in people- and place-based communities to support the democratic ideal of one-person, one-vote citizen sovereignty.

Our present economy falls far short on all these.

Bob Rundle, SAGE

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*If you take something from the DropBox, please use “save as” and leave the original where you found it so others may use it, too.--Ed.*

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## **From the Fellowship of Reconciliation: A Free Webinar on Pentagon Spending & How to Change It**

### **[Understanding the Pentagon Budget -- and How to Move the Money](#)**

Webinar with **Chris Hellman**, National Priorities Project

Thursday, January 31, 2:00 PM Eastern

Pentagon spending, which has increased 50% since 2001, has moved from relative obscurity to center stage. Activists have the opportunity of a generation to achieve real and lasting decreases to military spending.

**Learn how and where to get the Pentagon spending facts you need to shape the national debate.** The next six weeks are critical, but your knowledge will also support the long-term effort to reorient national priorities.

This [free webinar](#) with analyst, researcher and experienced workshop leader Chris Hellman will help you understand better the mammoth Pentagon budget, how to find and use the information you need to campaign for changed national priorities, and develop skills for what will be a long-term struggle to shift those priorities.

Chris Hellman is a policy analyst with the National Priorities Project. He previously served with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, the Center for Defense Information, and as a congressional staffer. Last year he co-lead several day-long trainings on how to "Move the Money" together with Peace Action. This is part of a series of Militarism Watch webinars on strengthening skills to research militarism to serve activism, organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

## **[Register now for "Understanding the Pentagon Budget -- and How to Move the Money" on Thursday, January 31.](#)**

**[Fellowship of Reconciliation](#)  
[for@forusa.org](mailto:for@forusa.org) | [www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org)**

## **THE SPARROW SINGS**

**December, 2012**

*"The Sandy Hook massacre isn't just about the need for gun control laws, it is about a culture that condones the killing of children and teaches children that killing is acceptable. It is about a country addicted to violence on television and movie screens. It is about cuts in education and services for the mentally ill. It is about giving the military free access to our schools, even Christian schools that claim to follow Christ who told us to love, not kill, our enemies. It is about environmental and health policies that expose our children to all manner of toxins in the air, land and water. It is about thinking we have the right to kill children with drones or by dropping toxic munitions, that cause birth defects and miscarriages, on their countries. It is about saddling our children with crippling education debt and no prospect for jobs. It is about telling boys and men they have to be tough and to fight and kill for what they want or think is right. It is about national policy that denies children basic rights and systemically teaches them that violence is acceptable. All the reporting on the young victims never report the root causes of this tragedy." (Lucinda Marshall, Founder and Director of the Feminist Peace Network)*

*"The usual response to our vigils at the gun stores and gun shows is 'Cars kill more people than guns. Should we ban cars?' Our*

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*response is that cars are built to transport people. However, the sole purpose of a gun is to do violence to others. People who own guns are those ready to do violence to another to protect property and person. People are not more secure with guns. A Harvard research showed that homicides with guns were much more prevalent in states that have more guns available to the public and that gun owners' families are almost twice as likely to be murdered and 17 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun. There were 61 mass murders in the past 30 years in the U.S.” (Mother Jones, Dec., 2012)*

Some 85 Americans are shot to death each day in the U.S. On average, two children per day are killed with guns. (RSN, 12/31/12) As of Dec.28, there were 306 homicides with guns since the Sandy Hook killings with 500 gun deaths in Chicago this year. (Slate) The number of mass killings doubled since the expiration of the federal assault-weapons ban in 1994. We have far more homicides with guns than do the Europeans. Last year, England, Germany and Finland had fewer than 50 homicides with guns. Israel and Switzerland allow anyone to carry a gun, but now they have tightened the gun laws substantially. In the U.S. guns are sold covertly to people with criminal backgrounds, especially at gun shows. Straw purchases are common with little consequences for the guns' sellers. We feel that anyone who sells a gun to another is an accomplice of a crime if that gun is used to commit a crime. If I drive someone to a bank so the person can rob the bank, I am an accomplice to the robbery. The same with the one who sells a gun since the gun's sole purpose is to do violence to another. The N.R.A. claims that guns protect us and that they are absolutely needed to be safe.

This is not true, according to the research done on this matter. The N.R.A. makes a lot of money with their misstatements to the public and spends millions on lobbying for looser gun laws. Their motivation for promoting guns is greed, not need. The very wealthy group of corporations called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) financially supports the N.R.A. And while gun violence has human costs, it also comes with a substantial economic cost. A Center of American Progress study of violent crime in eight American cities found that three types of violent crime – homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault – cost taxpayers \$3.7 billion a year in higher medical costs, spending on police and courts and lost productivity from crime victims and criminals. The yearly cost of violence crime in these eight cities averages \$320 per taxpayer. People who want to be secure must realize that violence does not make one more secure. Gun owners claim that they have a constitutional right to own guns. However, the Constitution gives the militia the right to carry firearms, not private individuals. Those who choose not to buy guns also have rights, including the right to walk down our streets and go to school without worrying that someone with a gun will be around the corner to threaten us or shoot us and our children. We join [MICAH](#) in going to the sites in Milwaukee where people have been killed with guns and pray with the victims' families and the perpetrators of the homicides, and usually every week we have two or three vigils. The victims have lost their most sacred right, the right to life.--Don Timmerman

## INTERESTING FACTS

According to Human Rights Watch, the number of mentally ill inmates in U.S. prisons quadrupled from 2000 to 2006, and it continues to rise. In fact,

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the rate of inmate mental illness is five times greater (56%) than in the non-incarcerated population. Now that most state-run treatment centers and hospitals are closed, prison is now the last resort for the mentally ill. Last year, the U.S. imprisoned a record 425,000 immigrants. Private prisons profit greatly from this. Some charge the government as much as \$160 per night per prisoner kept.--*Guardian UK*, 12/3/12

The U.S. exported \$336.5 million worth of firearms in 2011. The N.R.A. is trying to block a U.N. treaty in which governments agree not to export weapons to countries that are under an arms embargo, or to export weapons that would facilitate "the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, or other violations of international humanitarian law.--*The Guardian UK*

The number of soldier suicides in Afghanistan this year has outnumbered combat deaths. That's a suicide a day --CBS News

Livestock in areas where "fracking" is occurring are getting sick and dropping dead in alarming numbers. "Fracking" seems to be poisoning the water they drink, since certain highly toxic chemicals are used in the process of extracting oil from the sand.--*Readers Supported News*, 12/3/12

Last year all the world's nations combined pumped nearly 38.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the air from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil. That is about a billion tons more than the previous year.--*Nature Climate Change*

– Wealthy nations are spending five times more money on fossil fuel subsidies than climate aid. The U.S. spent \$13 billion on fossil fuel subsidies in 2011 and just \$2.5 billion on climate aid.--*Democracy Now*, 12/4/12

The U.S. solar industry employs 119,000 in 5,600 companies in the U.S. That is more than are employed by coal mining in the U.S.-- *EcoWatch*,

In a study called *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Dr. Maria J. Stephan and Dr. Erica Chenoweth analyzed 323 resistance movements that took place between 1900 and 2005. They discovered that 53% of nonviolent campaigns succeeded, while only 26% of violent campaigns achieved their objectives. In a separate report examining 67 transitions from authoritarianism between 1972 and 2005, Freedom House revealed that nonviolent organizing was the "key factor" in 50 transitions; campaigns that primarily employed nonviolence were substantially more likely to remain free than cases where violence was the key factor.

**NOTES FROM 21<sup>ST</sup> STREET:** "Help me to walk respectfully on my Mother the Earth so none of its plants will be crushed. Help me to walk into people's lives in the same way, so none will be bruised." (Jose Hobday) We begin a new year. Our hearts are heavy because of the killing of the 20 school children plus staff members. There were many mass killings this year. When the U.S.A. went to war in Iraq I felt that violence would increase throughout our society. When a country decides that the only way to solve problems is through violence and not through the world court system, that violent mentality will trickle down to all of society. We need gun control, good health care for our mentally ill, and a government that handles problems intelligently and non-violently. May we learn as a people to walk gently on the land and gently into the lives of others so none will be bruised, and all will be revered. Peace, Roberta

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