

Peaceways

CENTRAL KENTUCKY COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE June 2020

The United States, Iran, and the Coronavirus Crisis

by Peter Berres

In tragic fashion, individuals, communities, and nations have fumbled through this pandemic, searching a way out. Fortunately, the essence of any rational exit or effective management is familiar to us: “We’re all in this together.”

With the entire world on its knees, recovery obviously requires world cooperation. Our challenge is whether we can rise above selfish interests and grow into international perspectives and global strategies.

These things could begin for the U.S. by recasting our relations with Iran. After four decades of punishing sanctions and deadly provocations, we now share with Iran the distinction of being among the most virus-devastated countries in the world, due to ironically similar ineffective national leadership.

Iran ranks number 10 on Worldometer’s list of most devastated countries; the U.S. is number one. From early on, both governments’ incompetence, political corruption and prioritization of maintaining power have worsened the impact.

Nonetheless, Iran’s prospect for containing the virus has been especially hindered by Donald Trump’s “maximum pressure” policy: strict economic sanctions that limited its ability to trade with other nations, blocking vital goods from reaching Iran and inhibiting its ability to respond to the current pandemic.

The “ignore, delay, deny” responses by our democracy and their theocracy share motivations: fear of looking weak, concern with strong democratic opposition groups in Iran, and momentum toward U.S. elections in November.

Both countries’ failures are related to their deference to China: Iran’s dependence on oil sales and Trump’s fantasy relationship with President Xi, caused both to delay, so as not to offend.

Both governments have taken illegal measures to squash, manipulate, and misrepresent virus statistics. Across Iran, local health officials have complained that vast under-reporting was forced. A recent report by Iran’s Parliament stated the number of people infected is probably eight to 10 times higher than reported figures. Likewise in the U.S., accounts abound of deliberate hiding, miscounting, misrepresenting and under-reporting of infections and deaths by the VA, nursing homes, health departments, prisons, and military quarters among the most visible.

Failure to act quickly, general ineptitude and political self-interest led to lying and denying—allowing the virus to spread, even as both countries declared success. If it weren’t tragic, it would be comical.

On April 9, Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, appeared on Iranian TV to talk about the coronavirus. Instead of acknowledging government failures, he declared a triumph. “The Iranian nation had a brilliant performance in this test.”

Donald Trump’s constant claims of success—directly in the face of conflicting statistics—don’t deserve reminding.

Desperate, Iran is on the edge, surviving America’s intensifying economic war, losing its war with the virus, and taken to the brink of war with Trump, twice.

Khamenei uses confrontation to justify crushing domestic opponents and to explain away economic mismanagement. Rising tensions with the U.S. have coincided with crackdowns on, and exclusion of, reformers from ballots—clearly counter to American goals and interests.

Reportedly, Khamenei has confided that “We need the United States as an enemy.”

Like-minded, Trump spewed speculation President Obama would start a war with Iran to misdirect Americans from his failures. Understandably, Congress is sufficiently worried with an impulsive, erratic, uninformed commander-in-chief. Bi-partisan majorities in both chambers passed two “Iran War Powers Resolutions Acts” to require constitutionally mandated Congressional

authorization to go to war with Iran. Trump vetoed the first in February and the second on May 6.

A basic historical lesson should be clear. As in Cuba, when America threatens Iran, all Iranians, regardless of their domestic, religious, or political differences, will band together nationally and resist to any end.

The smartest strategy, clearly, is to provide assistance and begin easing sanctions. A humanitarian response would undercut the Iranian right by changing the narrative employed to justify oppression and economic disaster, thereby strengthening democratic forces, which represent the majority of Iranians.

It may be the rarified air of long quarantine, but if “humanitarian diplomacy” were dangled so Trump could see it suits his political needs it could be implemented in two ways.

First, remove American sanctions, especially on Iran’s financial institutions, to allow the country to receive at least a portion of its oil revenue to buy medical equipment and drugs it needs to treat coronavirus patients. Secondly, allow Iranians living in the U.S. to send money and medical goods to their families to take them out of poverty and help Iran’s fight against the pandemic.

Given all this pandemic has exposed regarding the vulnerabilities inherent in global interconnectedness and shared fates, as we move toward normalcy, the future of global public health cannot reflect what preceded COVID-19.

The virus has highlighted essential needs: worldwide scientific and medical cooperation and logistical coordination to address health inequalities within and between countries.

COVID-19 challenges American selfish individualism and national isolationism, revealing deadly vulnerabilities inherent in both, underscoring that our fates are tied to every person in the world. We’re all in this world-wide pandemic together; we all must be involved in the solution.

Peter Berres, a Vietnam veteran and semi-retired educator of international relations, visited Iran with a peace delegation last fall.

Gun Violence	
In America as of 5-25-20	
2020 (year to date)	
Killed	6,208
Suicide	9,636
Wounded	11,078
2019 (annual)	
Killed	15,208
Wounded	29,501
Source: www.gunviolencearchive.org	

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Election officer gives perspective on expanded absentee voting

by Margaret Gabriel

Most are aware that in order to preserve the health of both voters and poll workers during the coronavirus pandemic, Kentucky has expanded absentee voting for the June 23 primary election.

CKCPJ member Penny Christian is an election officer who received notification shortly after the Kentucky “Healthy at Home” campaign started that there would be a need for significantly fewer poll workers in the primary. In past years, absentee voting was limited to people in the military, those who would be traveling, and those with disabilities.

The procedure for expanded absentee voting was created, and on May 22 voters began to receive the information needed to cast an absentee ballot.

If you have not received the information and you are registered to vote, see govoteky.com.

“When I started, everybody was retired or over 60,” said Penny. Because she has not reached that milestone birthday, Penny has been asked to work at the in-person polling place. At publication time, she was unaware of how many or where the in-person polls would be.

Penny believes the expanded absentee balloting will increase voter turnout.

“There’s already been a huge spike in voter registration and it will be much easier for people who are marginalized to vote.”

She suspects part of the increase in registration can be traced to the restoration of felons’ voting rights, but even more of the increase, she believes, is because people see a greater importance of and need for casting a ballot.

Although the details for absentee balloting have been determined for the upcoming primary, there has been no discussion for such a process for the general election. The state and federal ballots are different, Penny said, and those disparities have not yet been discussed in the light of absentee voting for the general election.

Kentucky was in the process of reverting to paper balloting in order to guarantee a higher level of security, but those plans will be delayed because of the way voting will be conducted in 2020, Penny said.

“All in all, the pandemic has shone a light on the barriers we have to voting in Kentucky. Since we’ve seen them more clearly maybe we’ll be able to create an easier, fairer process.”

The Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice

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Lexington Farmers’ Market Open With Distancing

The Lexington Farmers’ Market website (lexingtonfarmersmarket.com) says “Crowds are Prohibited but Everyone is Welcome.” Although such event-based programs as Lexington Makers Market and Master Gardeners are postponed and sampling has been discontinued, food access programs have started and will continue throughout the growing season.

The Saturday market is being held in the Rupp Arena parking lot at the corner of Maxwell and Broadway because the needed distancing is not possible at the

downtown pavilion. That is also the location on Tuesday and Thursday. The Wednesday market is held at Greater Gardenside. On Sunday the market is on Southland Drive.

Organizers are determined to maintain the needed social distancing to keep the market safe and have made requests for shoppers, including:

- keep party-sizes small;
- wait until a vendor is finished with a previous customer before approaching;
- avoid cash transactions (see the website for information about pre-ordering from vendors);
- limit time at the market;
- ask vendors to hand you the items you have selected;
- above all, BE PATIENT!

Even with the needed precautions, aren’t you relieved that at least one thing will be the same this summer?



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Support CKCPJ by linking your Kroger Plus card to #16439 at krogercommunityrewards.com.

Calendar for Peace & Justice

The council seeks to promote dialogue as a path to peace and justice. Consequently, we announce events that we do not necessarily endorse.

Tues., June 2

CKCPJ health care action committee, 5-6 p.m. The committee will meet online via Zoom. To receive the needed link to attend the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com.

Tues., June 9

CKCPJ peace action committee, 4:30-6 p.m. The committee will meet online via Zoom. To receive the needed link to attend the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com.

Mon., June 15

CKCPJ steering committee meeting, 5 - 6:30 p.m. The committee will meet online via Zoom. To receive the needed link to participate in the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com

PFLAG Central Kentucky

PFLAG Central Kentucky, Second Tuesday 6:30-8:30 p.m., St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington. Meetings are suspended, but support is available at info@pflagcentralky.org or by phone, 859-338-4393

Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Monthly Meetings Last Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon. Hunter Presbyterian Church, 109 Rosemont Garden. Meetings have been cancelled until Fall, when the speaker will be Tom Eblen, an independent journalist, writer and photographer based in Lexington. Watch *Peaceways* calendar page for the specific date.

Tues., June 23

Election Day, 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. The primary has been moved from May 19. The ballot will include the presidential and senatorial races. In an executive order dated April 24, Gov. Andy Beshear ordered the expansion of absentee voting and the creation of drive-through voting that will allow for less contact between voters and workers. For more information see governor.ky.gov. The general election is Nov. 3.

Rescheduled for September

BUILD, Nehemiah Action, Heritage Hall, 430 Vine Street, Lexington.

Here it is again, a bingo card instead of a roster of meetings for June. <sigh> Maybe we'll have meetings to list for July. As was true for April and May, you can win fabulous prizes for this bingo game, albeit virtually. Some suggestions for either a straightline or coverall bingo are: Peace on earth; \$1000 (because that's the prize for a coverall at Kentucky's charitable bingo halls); the pandemic goes away; big party with family and friends; and a trip to somewhere besides Kroger. Award yourself any prize you want and email results to peacewayseditor@gmail.com. Prizes carry over because there were no winners in April or in May, making me think no one is playing.

H	O	M	E	!
Watched Andy at 5 <i>(aka Beer with Beshear)</i>	Got a haircut after May 25	Read a classic I forgot to read in high school	Scheduled a Zoom call with my family	Heard the phrase Healthy at Home
Binge-watched another Netflix series	Bought candy instead of vegetables at the grocery	Stayed up until 3 a.m., slept 'til noon	Heard the phrase Healthy at Home	Resisted the urge to throw my laptop out the window
Looked at the Pace e Bene on-line activities	Bought vegetables instead of chips at the grocery	FREE <i>me from this house (still)</i>	Masked up and went to the Farmer's Market	Sat down to watch Andy at 5 on Saturday, forgot he's taking weekends off
Went to Trader Joe's	Heard the phrase Healthy at Home	Gave blood	Listened to a new podcast	Took a bike ride
Heard the phrase Healthy at Home	Re-read a favorite book	Washed my hands for less than 20 seconds (honesty required)	Participated in a virtual event at the library	Ate three healthy meals (in one week)

A Collective Bargain: *Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy*

By Jane McAlevey. 304 pages. Published January 7, 2020 by Ecco, New York.

Reviewed by Steve Katz

Despite her quarter-century of labor organizing and two previous, significant books published in the last eight years as Jane McAlevey became an academic (she still moonlights as an organizer and consultant on campaigns), I hadn't heard of the author until I chanced on an interview with her on filmmaker Michael Moore's podcast, Rumble, in early April. Those that want their ears and eyes opened can listen to that episode at <https://rumble.media/episode/episode-64-its-about-fcking-winning-featuring-jane-mcalevey/>.

More than four decades ago, I majored in Labor Studies in my second attempt at higher education in my home state of New Jersey. Before long, though, I was waylaid into a career in the horse business when they built The Meadowlands Racetrack basically in my backyard. Given the severe decline of the labor movement in all the years since, I should have considered abandoning a career as an organizer as fortuitous. It isn't good for the soul to be beaten into submission by generations of losing battles. But seeking justice will always be my calling. Alas, my chosen alternative turned out not to be much better in the long run, as the racing industry isn't what it used to be, either.

Most of the voices I've become used to hearing from labor have been mournful. After all, the union membership rate, which was still over 20% 25 years ago (down from a peak of more than 28% the year before I was born) is now down to around 10%. But McAlevey sounded a different note. While mindful of the stiff odds faced by workers trying to gain recognition of unions and good contracts, as Moore quoted her in the title of his podcast episode, she sees it as being "About F*cking Winning!" And she knows time-tested methods of how to win.

There have been more workers on strike in the last couple of years in the United States than there have been in the last three decades. And McAlevey has been personally involved in winning a couple of those strikes, which she details in case studies in her book. *A Collective Bargain* is part labor history, part survey of labor law, part organizing primer, but is most effective in placing the labor movement in its role as the vanguard of the vast majority of people in our society — the

99%, as it were.

Her power structure analysis makes up the bulk of her book's introduction and closing chapter.

She posits that the billionaire class has equal influence on both the Democrats and Republicans with its wealth creating a "Party of Inequality." Union struggles are the only

avenue to give working class people the power to level the power of corporations and improve their lives. This is why political players like the surviving Koch brother have remained so focused on union busting. The 2016 election that saw the Union-Buster-in-Chief, Donald Trump, use racism and sexism to sow division among people mirrored the tactics used by union busters for decades in every hard union fight. Those fights have been won by workers when they overcome the odds with a winning strategy, which can be replicated in the broader society outside the workplace. As McAlevey puts it, "Big strikes are political education, bigly."

That winning strategy is the construction of solidarity, often involving the erasure of lines separating the workplace from society. With powerful forces opposing organized labor, enormous effort is required to build enormous unity. McAlevey's goal is to build a threshold of 90% support across all workers in a campaign to win, because she knows what she's going to face from the union busters. Getting to that level of support can be assessed through what she describes as "participatory, public structure tests." Anonymous, private stances are meaningless when push comes to shove.

A further key strategy question: which workers to focus on. Which states, which markets, and which sectors? What is the why, when, where, and how to achieve wins? Those were the same questions faced by labor in the 1930s. But in today's world, the sectors where wins are most



possible, and impactful, are different. Now the core strategic industries, where workers are harder to fire from jobs that aren't going to be off-shored, are largely in the service sector of the economy. And the workers who dominate that sector, particularly in healthcare and education, are mostly female. Those sectors are also the target of the Wall Street firms "who attempt to suck the life out of education and health care, to turn students and patients into profit centers."

The book's chapters on recent campaigns in Pennsylvania hospitals and in school districts from West Virginia to California show that women have the power to hold the line on corporate greed. The capacity to win is also detailed in the hospitality sector, where women who clean hotel rooms and are frequently subject to sexual harassment, organized a successful HOPO ("Hands Off, Pants On") campaign.

McAlevey concludes that securing needed change, regardless of who wins the upcoming elections, will require the constant mobilization of "the troops in the field" to resist the efforts of the big corporate lobbies bent on preventing significant change from happening. And I agree with her that effective political engagement can't be done from the comfort of your home on Facebook or Twitter. We need to participate in public structure tests of our resolve in order to create the crises for the capitalists that can result in our winning.

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Steve is CKCPJ's treasurer.

Non-violence on-line training

A banner at the top of the Pace e Bene website says “Stuck inside? Check out our online activities here!

CKCPJ member Kerby Neill emailed information to Peace Action Committee members telling them about non-violence training that is being conducted on-line by Veronica Pelicarić and Rivera Sun, who facilitated the Lexington training in 2019.

The online course is described on the website as “a basic introduction to principled and strategic non-violence using Pace e Bene’s Engaging Non-Violence Manual. It is intended to provide an opportunity to build community while studying non-violence. Using small and large groups, facilitators will guide the participants through exploration into the personal, interpersonal, and social-justice aspects of nonviolence. The course is designed to be accessible, fun, friendly, and fearless.”

Several CKCPJ members have registered for the course, which began on May 28 and will meet every Thursday through July 2. Kerby has encouraged the participants to join the local community of non-violence trainers.

Activities on the website include free podcasts featuring Father John Dear reflecting on non-violence. Father Dear records the podcasts specially for Pace e Bene. There are book recommendations as well as ways to sign up for daily inspirations from Pace e Bene.

*Afflict the comfortable;
give comfort to the afflicted.*

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Check with website for times when meetings are resumed

CKCPJ Steering Committee Meetings, third Monday, 5 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. More info: (859) 488-1448 or peaceandjusticeky@gmail.com. All are welcome.

Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Peace, every Thursday, 5:30 - 6 p.m. at Triangle Park (corner of Broadway and Main Street) in downtown Lexington. Contact Richard Mitchell, (859) 327-6277.

Migrant Network Coalition, first Monday, noon - 1:15 p.m., GLOBAL LEX, 1306 Versailles Road, Lexington. Contact Lindsay Mattingly, lmatingly@lexpublib.org, (859) 231-5514.

PFLAG Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. LGBTQ individuals of all ages, family members, friends and allies are welcome. St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington. Visit info@pflagcentralky.org or (859) 338-4393. Speakers followed by confidential support group meeting.

Bluegrass Fairness of Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Lexington Public Central Library, 140 E. Main St., Lexington. Contact Craig Cammack, chair, (859) 951-8565 or info@lexfair.org.

Wednesday Night GLSO “Heart to Heart” discussion group, 7 p.m., Pride Center, 389 Waller Ave., Lexington. GLSO operates Kentucky’s only Pride Center, where they have quietly provided services to the GLBTQQA community for decades. More info, Pride Center hours, and other links at www.glsso.org.

Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky, first Thursday, 7 p.m., Great Hall of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Rd., Lexington. The Forum is a Chapter of the American Humanist Association. Meetings are open to people of all beliefs willing to express their opinions in a civil manner. Child care is provided. Contact President Staci Maney, staci@olliegee.com or (859) 797-2662.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, third Thursday, 7 p.m., Episcopal Diocese Mission House at Fourth St. and MLK Blvd, Lexington. Contact Beth Howard, (859) 276-0563.

NAMI Lexington Support Groups, every Sunday, 2:30 - 4 p.m. Participation Station, 869 Sparta Ct., Lexington. Call (859) 272-7891 or visit www.namilex.org.

Christian-Muslim Dialogue Program, fourth Saturday, 10 a.m. - noon. All are welcome. Locations vary, call (859) 277-5126. The Christian-Muslim dialogue promotes understanding and mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. By exploring moral, cultural and political factors shaping the current context, the program promotes personal and collective responsibility to build a more just and peaceful world.

Dance Jam, every Tuesday, 5:30 - 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. Move to the extent you are able. Sponsored by Motion Matters, \$7 per session to cover space rental. Contact Pamela, info@motionmatters.org, (859) 351-3142.

Movies with Spirit, second Friday of every month. Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Road, Lexington. Potluck at 6 p.m., film at 7.

National Action Network, third Thursday each month, 7 - 8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, Lexington.

Showing Up for Racial Justice, second Tuesday of the month, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Wild Fig Coffee and Books, 726 N. Limestone, Lexington.

To include a regular meeting of your organization in this space, contact Margaret Gabriel, peacewayseditor@gmail.com.



The Central Kentucky Council
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*Better to be busy
than to be busy worrying.*

— *Angela Lansbury*

BUILD holds car rally

by Margaret Gabriel

During “Dessert with Dan,” on May 19, a Facebook Live event that is part of “Healthy at Home,” Father Dan Noll announced plans for the first gathering in a long time at Mary Queen of the Holy Rosary Church. On May 21, he said, BUILD would use the parish parking lot to promote social justice.

In order to protest the 90 percent cut to the Affordable Housing Fund in Mayor Linda Gorton’s proposed budget for Lexington, BUILD (Building a United Interfaith Lexington through Direct action) invited citizens to drive to the Mary Queen parking lot on Clay’s Mill Road and rally for the restoration of those funds.

There were over 100 cars in attendance, cars which represented over 15,000 people from 26 faith communities in Lexington.

“I’m pastor of this parking lot,” Father Noll said through a bullhorn from the back of a truck. He asked people to abide by the safety rules BUILD established for the rally: Stay in your car, socialize only if you can maintain a safe distance, and turn off engines. Signs displayed in car windows proclaimed “Housing for All,” “We Need Homes to be Healthy” and “Honk for Housing.” Father Noll invited rally-ers to honk when they heard a point they wanted to emphasize, but said, “I’m not sure what that will do for my relationship with the neighbors!”

COVID-19 has affected most of society, Father Noll said, but even more so, “it has affected people who are struggling. And now they’re also

struggling with coronavirus. To be healthy at home, people need homes more than ever!”

Father Noll referred to budgets as moral documents, and the budget under discussion targets the most vulnerable people in Lexington. “Housing is essential,” he said. The Affordable Housing Fund was established in 2014 after BUILD began calling for its formation six years earlier. Since 2014, over 1,700 families in Lexington no longer have to make choices about whether to pay rent or buy food and medicine.

The fund has a huge impact on Lexington, Father Noll said, by adding jobs and revenue. “Kids do better in school when they have secure housing. This pandemic has showed us the importance of home. We can’t be healthy at home if we don’t have a home!”

Faith leader Adam Jones (Open Door Church) told stories of people in his congregation who have been affected by unaffordable housing in Lexington. Pastor Nathl Moore (First African Baptist Church) told of Ferrill Square Apartments, on the campus of his church, which offers affordable housing for eligible seniors and people with disabilities. The Affordable Housing Fund has made those apartments possible, Pastor Moore said.

Vice Mayor Steve Kay told the assembly that he had never spoken to cars, and had never shared a platform with faith leaders. He said the budget



Adam Jones, pastor of Open Door Church, Lexington, answers questions from reporters.

reflects the values of the community and “this is not a time to abandon people who are vulnerable at a time when the need will only grow.”

He said he believes the council will restore the needed funding.

The rally was closed by Rev. Joseph Owens, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, who said he was shocked when he learned the Affordable Housing Fund had been cut by 90 percent, but “I was angry” when he learned of the additional cuts to social services and programs that serve people who are homeless.

“Is it love of your neighbor, if your neighbor is homeless, if your neighbor can’t buy food, if your neighbor has to choose between buying medicine and paying rent? These are impossible choices.”

Quoting Rev. Martin Luther King, Rev. Owens said, “Now is the time for us to act! If you believe that, honk your horn.” He led the rally in prayer for the mayor and council to have the strength to make difficult choices.

“Let the people say ‘Amen,’” Rev. Owens and a chorus of car horns sounded..