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Volume 4, Issue 2

# WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis



## Special Interest Articles:

- Theme of this issue...
- Gun Violence
- International Women's Day



## Individual Highlights:

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*Sr. Cecilia Marie Morton, Sr. Donna Wilhelm, Sr. Dorothy Pagosa, Jennifer Dillon,  
Sr. Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Sr. Rose Grabowski, Sr. Shannon Fox  
—Social Justice Committee*

## I have come that they may have life...

*by Sister Marge White*

**I**n trying to set a theme for this issue of our Social Justice newsletter, I reflected on this Easter Season and the meaning it has for our tumultuous world.

**W**hat I came to realize is that we are called to midwife what is possible,

wherever we are, even in the face of violence and civil discord.

Therefore, I have chosen the Scripture passage from John 10:10...

***I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.***

The articles in this newsletter will hopefully call and challenge us to be those midwives.

**T**he information is not easy to hear, but as Franciscans we must listen carefully and follow the challenge and call to the best of our ability. ■

## Gun Violence

**O**n February 14, 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Seventeen people were killed and fifteen more were taken to hospitals, making it one of the worst deadliest school massacres.

Almost two months later there is no action on the

part of Congress to pass comprehensive gun legislation. However, some states are taking action on their own, which is heartening.

**W**hat might we be called to do? Could it be to:

- Visit an organization that works with victims of gun violence and their families?

- Arrange for a speaker or educational program on the issue?
- Participate in marches, pilgrimages, vigils, and rallies?
- Meet or write our elected officials and express our opinion in person?

**W**hatever it means for you, we do not have the option to do nothing. ■

## International Women's Day

**I**n March as a nation we celebrated International Women's Day.

The plight of women around the globe was highlighted in the #MeToo movement to help demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment.

**T**IME Magazine chose the Silence Breakers as the "2017 Person of the Year."

**W**e are called to remember:

Those who have no one to speak for them; those so marginalized that they are not a part of the social consciousness; to

*sacrifice our honor, our steady footing, when the dignity of any person is downtrodden.*

Apostolic Creed

## Immigrant Prisons

*“Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families. The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of security and the means of livelihood which he or she cannot find in his or her country of origin.”*

—Catechism of the Catholic Church

The conundrum is that they are given jobs but not legal status.

According to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, immigrants fill gaps in low and high skilled jobs left by American-born workers. Many start their own businesses, employing others, and collectively add billions of dollars to the US economy.

From a legal perspective, undocumented immigrants have not committed a crime and are not criminals. They have violated civil codes, such as when a person ignores a traffic ordinance.

Migrants and their families enter the US for jobs and to survive. Visas and legal channels to work, or to reunite with family members, are severely limited.

A resource from Brave New Films looks at the 440,000 immigrants imprisoned each year throughout the U.S. in 200 facilities owned and operated by large private prison companies. They hold lucrative contracts to lock up women, children and men. Click on the link to view the 15-minute video:

[www.bravenewfilms.org/immigrantprisons](http://www.bravenewfilms.org/immigrantprisons)

Given this reality it is even more important that we collaborate with groups addressing the incarceration of immigrant women, men, and especially children who lack the legal resources to speak on their behalf. ■



## Racism and Religious Intolerance

As Franciscans, non-violence and the acceptance of those society considers “the other” is a core value of our charism. We are obliged to examine deeply our own racist attitudes which can be expressed very subtly.

Most of us are not even aware of our own racist leanings. Oftentimes we can feel guilt and defend our sense of “not being racist.” This prevents us from honestly looking

at our own tendencies that have been so engrained in our society. It is hard for us to walk in another person’s shoes or understand another person’s experience in discrimination.

In 2017 the Social Justice Committee conducted three seminars—in Bartlett, Garfield Heights, and Stevens Point—to explore more deeply the topic of race and religious intolerance. Positive feedback was received from attendees. More

opportunities of this nature may be provided in the future, to address our Deepest Desires.

The recent bombing of mosques and the discrimination against Muslims is intolerable. Words such as, *Go back to your own country* or *You are not welcome*, are heard all too frequently.

We can immediately make a judgment about a person because of their garb. Muslim girls, especi-

**Continued on p. 3**



*“We embrace our immigrant roots and identify with the struggle of all people to find a home in this world.”*

—26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, Congregational Commitment

*Racism and Religious Intolerance... continued*

ially, are bullied because some wear the hijab, often in the form of a headscarf.

According to the [Southern Poverty Law Center \(SPLC\)](#), the number of hate groups in the United States in 2017 grew for the **3rd** straight year to **954**. In addition:

- Hate groups were found in all **50** states.
- Neo-Nazi groups were up **22%**.
- Anti-Muslim groups rose for a **3rd** straight year—after **tripling** in 2016, **13** more chapters were added last year.

These include: the Ku Klux Klan, Black Separ-

tists, Racist Skinheads, White Nationals, Neo-Nazis, Neo-Confederates, Christian Identity and Anti-LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered).

Last August, Bishop George Murry, S.J. was appointed by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the USCCB, to chair the ad hoc Committee Against Racism.

Below is a link to an excellent, well-researched presentation Bishop Murry recently made at Boston College.

The title of the presentation is: *Race in the American Catholic Imagination*. It runs about 45 min-

utes and is well worth your time. It's on You Tube and the link is below.

[View Presentation](#)

*“The Sultan and The Saint”* tells one of the great, lost stories from history. Set during the terrible time of the Crusades, it speaks with urgency to our present time. Two men of faith, one an itinerant Christian preacher, the other the ruler of a Muslim Kingdom, bucked a century of war, distrust, and insidious propaganda in a search for peace.

We take our example from Francis, Clare, Martin Luther King, Doris Day and a myriad of others who showed us the way. ■

**NOTICE  
INTOLERANCE  
WILL NOT BE  
TOLERATED.**

**RACISM**

## January Event in Stevens Point

by Sister Rose Grabowski

Our speaker for our annual Martin Luther King, Jr. program on January 15, 2018 was Roya Akhavan. Dr. Roya is an award-winning educator and scholar.

*“There is a new positive energy of enormous power stirring in the world, and it is leading us to a new way of life; one that is more peaceful and just.”*

This is how her book begins.

She notes that there are three major spiritual truths that are beginning to be realized: The earth is one country and humankind its citizens; women and men have been created equal; and there is only one race—the human race.

These realities are constantly being bombarded by other mindsets: racism, nationalism, religious strife, gender inequality, and extremes of wealth and poverty. These are root causes of war. The author spoke about terrorism as a

new form of violence and warfare. The constructive consciousness is asking the fundamental question: What are the factors that produce a ready pool of recruits for terrorism?

Using the constructive consciousness of individuals, she told us, we make use of the reality that we are one interconnected family. There is hope in continuing to improve international relations. Can we eliminate all types of weapons from the face of the earth? There is hope in our younger generation who is believing in the oneness of all humanity.

**“All** we need to do as catalysts in the constructive process is to align ourselves with this spirit and work to build model communities that reflect its constructive attributes of racial, national, and religious harmony, gender equality, and economic equity.” ■



Dr. Roya Akhavan, Ph.D. is author of *“Peace for our Planet: A New Approach”*



## Quotes You May Find Interesting

By Dr. Roya Akhavan, Ph.D., from her book, *Peace For Our Planet: A New Approach.*

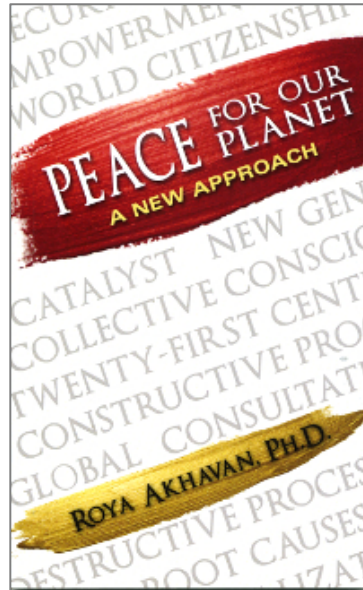
- According to an estimate by Oxfam, it would cost a mere sixty billion dollars to eradicate poverty throughout the world. That is less than the cost of two dozen B2-Spirit bombers and a negligible fraction of the multi-trillion-dollar annual military budget of the world's 196 sovereign nations.
- Science has now produced unequivocal evidence that there is only one race—the human race.
- Unity in diversity is also a feature of the totality of the universe.

*“Our refounding is grounded in a spirituality which integrates the Franciscan theology of Christo-centric incarnation which incorporates the Universe story and interfaith inclusion.”*

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments  
26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter



**We Celebrate**  
**EARTH DAY**  
on  
**April 22, 2018**



### Peace For Our Planet A New Approach

This book tells the story of a new historical dialectic in the world between two parallel processes – construction and destruction.

The author proposes that a constructive global collective consciousness emerged in the nineteenth century, and humanity has since progressed toward the achievement of a more just and peaceful world.

Outworn and destructive mindsets that have constituted the root causes of war for millennia – such as racism, nationalism, religious strife, gender inequality and extremes of wealth and poverty – have now been fully exposed and delegitimized. Those who have profited from these divisive attitudes, however, are bound to take a last stand.

Amidst the blinding haze generated by the accelerating collapse of outworn mindsets and institutions, this book brings into focus the forward march of the constructive process towards peace, and the powerful role each of us can play in its realization.

### REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- “Sightings”
- Brief write-ups of your activities, suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources, etc.

Note: The **next issue** of *We Commit Ourselves* will be published in **June**.

**Please send** any items for inclusion in this next issue to **Sister Donna Wilhelm** no later than **May 25<sup>th</sup>**, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend.

~ Your Social Justice Committee