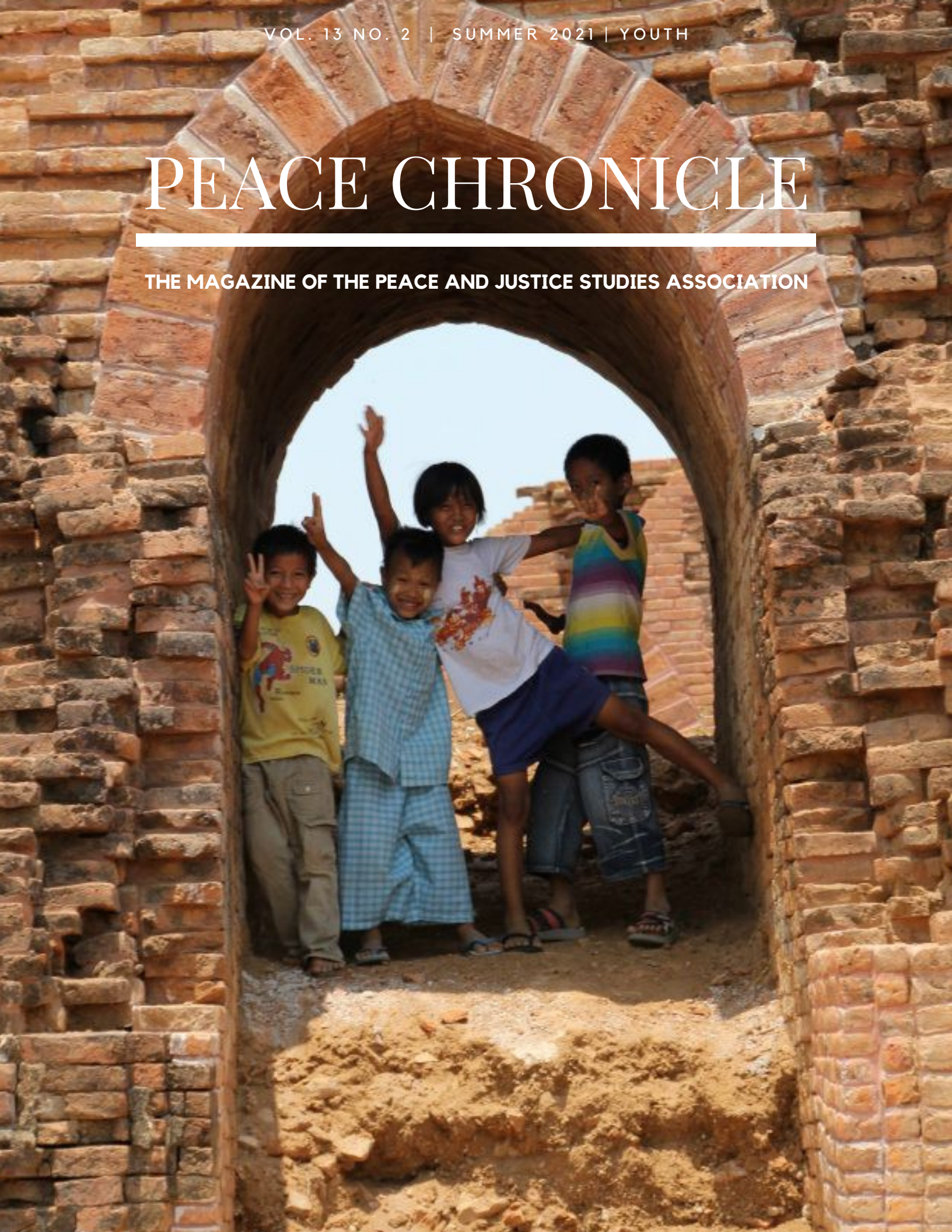


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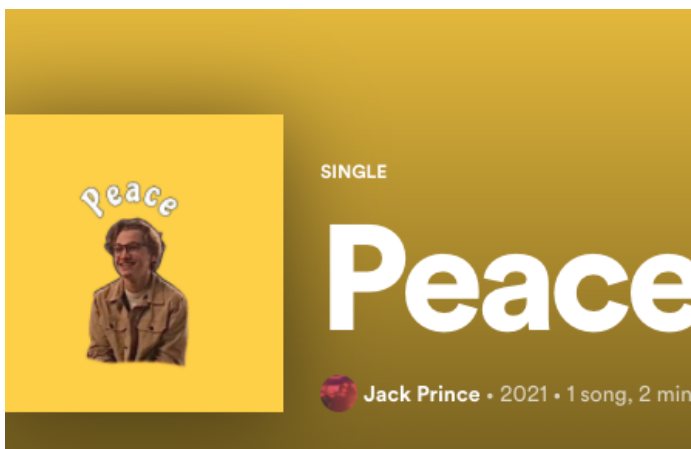


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THE JOY OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

WIM LAVEN

The cover image captures something magical I have experienced with so many children when traveling. It is hard to explain in words.

I have been lucky enough to travel to remarkable places during incredible times. Timing can make all the difference. When I was in Sri Lanka in 2005, for example, I was part of a team that traveled to Jaffna during the very brief period that the A9 highway was open to foreigners, and worked in remote camps where we became a spectacle.

The children were incredibly curious. With the help of a translator their questioning minds were revealed. One child was afraid that something was wrong with me while another pressed and rubbed against my skin trying to understand where my color had gone.

The conditions of war, isolation, and poverty created a context where I was sometimes the first white person a child had ever seen. No magazines or television or life experience had ever presented a pale figure like me. They wondered if some disease was doing this to me, or if I needed to wash the white off, because it was unnatural.

We would play games and, because I had a digital camera, I'd show pictures of the things I could not otherwise explain. On other occasions, they would pose for pictures. In the villages that I returned to regularly I would print the photos and deliver them.

There are no words to describe the experience. Sometimes parents cried when I gave them photos of their families, children, or newborn babies. Sometimes children returned the favor with drawings they'd made of me. So much love and care can be captured and shared through photography.

The cover photograph was taken in Bagan, Myanmar in April 2012. The country was in the early stages of transition, the gates to tourism were opening, and everyone was curious and hopeful. Restrictions placed on travel had kept the two thousand temples of Bagan from being experienced like the Angkor Wat temple complex in Cambodia, but that was rapidly changing.

I was traveling with coworkers while we were on break from classes for the celebration of Thingyan, Myanmar's New Year's water festival. There was a family living next door to the guesthouse where I stayed, and I had the chance to enjoy some digital diplomacy with them. In the beginning it was confusing, even my formal greeting—"Mingalaba"—may you be blessed—seemed to be mispronounced. There was no translator to bridge communication gaps, but the insistence was clear when the children wanted their picture taken. The oldest boy was very proud of his pose. As best as I could tell he was posing like Spiderman shooting a web from his hand. The bright colors and big smiles showcase an energy that makes me jealous of Peter Pan - I fondly recall the beginning of his story: "all of the children grew up except one."

LETTER FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

JENNIE BARRON

Aug 14, 2021

Welcome to our youth-themed issue. Here we present work by a variety of contributors representing diverse backgrounds and perspectives - youth, leaders of youth, allies of youth, and advocates for youth. The pieces speak *to* youth, *of* youth and their concerns, and about how we can all work together to change things *for* today's youth, while appreciating ever more how young people's activism can enable liberation for people of all ages.

Not surprisingly, themes running through this work include climate change, racism, and ageism – all subjects we know to have strong currency among youth. Other themes include precarious housing and decolonization – the latter being just one of many stops on the long road to reconciliation, a project that spans many generations. These pieces are united not just by the theme of youth, but by the sense of urgency, and the hunger for truth-telling, agency, and solidarity that animate struggles for social and environmental justice today.

Graeme Lee Rowlands combines a review of Seth Klein's very timely new book: *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*, with a policy proposal and description of a youth-empowering project Rowlands himself dreamed up. Supported by the BC-based environmental non-profit Wildsight, the [Youth Climate Corps](#) is entering its second year supporting youth to

take climate action while doing meaningful – and compensated – work to adapt to and mitigate climate change within our communities.

Zaynab Mohammed's poetic contribution explores the multi-faceted emotion of hate – not just what happens when we succumb to it, but what hate does to us, draining, imprisoning, diminishing us and “bending our thoughts in half”. Makram Daou's fiercely vibrant illustration complements the poem with visceral impact.

Meredith Macdonald shares her experience as a teenager and young adult living in Sorella House, a not-for-profit housing complex in the downtown eastside (DTES) of Vancouver, also known as the poorest postal code in Canada. She gives us a rare inside glimpse into the experience of those who are too often forgotten, neglected, and disrespected, and how they turn to each other to get by. Reading it reminds us of Gandhi's assertion that poverty is violence, and that nonviolence, as a response, requires our attention to dignity.

Xochilt Ramirez's piece about the REDress Project speaks to the challenges of making change when we feel we are swimming against a current of public indifference and historical amnesia. Yet it is equally an illustration of how things can be different for our young people, if we – parents and other adults – commit ourselves to truth-telling, to filling gaps in our understanding and educational curricula, and re-writing

“her-story”. It is about the importance of opening up spaces for dialogue where Indigenous women and girls’ voices can be heard. Sometimes it is in silence that we hear the most.

Jamie Hunter brings us the perspective of a young person who has recently but emphatically found his voice, one that reflects both a determined spirit and a gentle touch. He gives us a glimpse of youth activism that is equally about the pursuit of meaningful outcomes and thoughtful attention to process, an approach he says was fostered by his two years taking peace and justice studies at Selkirk College.

Gabriel Ertsgaard’s interview with Ariel Otterstad and Mark Dellagiacoma about youth ministry in the Lutheran church in Texas illustrates a very different approach to social change – not overt activism at all, but a subtle, dropping-crumbs or planting-seeds approach. The interviewees note how much social change has actually been achieved in the space of a generation, and how much power youth have to foster more transformation, if they have the support and encouragement of their elders.

Edward Hasbrouck offers up thoughtful views on youth and liberation from military conscription. He articulates ageism to anti-draft and anti-war positions, arguing that it is incumbent upon us to see and engage with this additional layer of oppression, the taken-for-granted discrimination that characterizes compulsory service or participation in war. As allies or would-be allies of youth, older adults must see ageism as a problem of older people, just as white people must play a role in resisting and dismantling racism, and men must see feminism as their issue, too. As in other movements, allyship in the anti-draft movement is not just about “saving” those most oppressed but about liberating us all.

Throughout this issue we see the agency, passion, and power of youth. Yet this issue is not intended as a tribute, nor an excuse for the rest of us to cheerlead from the sidelines. The hope for change that youth represent is something that older adults must actively cultivate with our support. The mantra of youth in the sixties, “Never trust anyone over 40” may still ring true today, but that doesn’t mean youth want to struggle for peace alone. Each generation has unique gifts to contribute to the realization of our collective potential for living together justly and well. This issue is about listening, bridging, and committing to navigating the road ahead together.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennie Barron lives in Nelson, BC (Canada) and teaches peace studies and restorative justice at Selkirk College in Castlegar, BC. She is also the Chair of the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College, where she organizes a speaker series, films, community conversations, trainings and myriad special events. Her academic background is varied and includes the study of social movement politics, allyship between environmentalists and Indigenous peoples, food justice and urban space. She is currently initiating a research project aimed at improving dialogue and listening across social and political divides.

Wim Laven, Ph.D., instructor of peace studies, political science, and conflict resolution, focuses his research on forgiveness and reconciliation, which he relates to his wide range of work and research experiences. His experience in the field spans 4 continents and includes many processes from mediating disputes in small claims court, to interventions during complex humanitarian disasters. He is on the executive boards of the International Peace Research Association and the Peace and Justice Studies Association, and is the Editor in Chief of the Peace Chronicle.

Graeme Lee Rowlands (he/him), 25, is the program manager for Wildsight's Youth Climate Corps program. Born in Honduras and raised in California, he now lives in Golden, British Columbia on the traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc peoples.

Jack Prince: a 14-year-old boy who makes music.

Edward Hasbrouck is an independent scholar and activist for peace, human rights, and youth liberation. A longtime member of the War Resisters League, he publishes the leading Web site of information about the draft, draft registration, and draft resistance, "Resisters.info" (<https://resisters.info>). As a non-lawyer legal worker, he is also a member of the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild. In 1983-1984, he "served" a six-month sentence in a Federal Prison Camp for knowing and willful refusal to present himself for and submit to registration with the Selective Service System.

Xochilt Ramirez was born in Nicaragua in 1988 during the Sandinista revolution. The fight for justice and freedom of expression was the background of her childhood. In 1990 her family moved back to Italy where she grew and studied Arts and Communications in Bologna. As winner of a grant for international students she lived in Spain in 2011 and Puerto Rico in 2012. In 2013 she moved to Canada with her family. While traveling, she never stopped writing. Now living in Nelson, she is dedicating her energy and time to art and activism. Xochilt dedicates her first English piece to the youth of this country: "You are the hope for a better future, called to fight the present historical and economic situation we live in. Never stop asking questions and with a critical mind, analyze the answers given to you."

Ariel Otterstad is Associate Pastor for Discipleship at Living Word Lutheran Church in Katy, Texas. In this role she oversees all discipleship ministries including, Child, Youth & Family Ministries; Christian Education; Milestones Ministry; Small Group Ministries; and Discipleship Themes. In addition to serving Living Word, she is also the creator and administrator of toolboxforfaith.org – an online Confirmation Ministry and author of many seasonal family faith resources. She is a graduate of Newberry College and United Lutheran Seminary.

Mark Dellagiacoma is Coordinator of Children's Ministry for Living Word Lutheran Church in Katy, Texas. He assists in developing, directing, and leading ministry with and for families with children ages birth to 5th grade. He has nearly two decades experience in children's and youth ministry, including positions with both local congregations and church camps.

Gabriel Ertsgaard is the interviews editor for Peace Chronicle and copy editor for the literary journal Drifting Sands. A former English lecturer, he earned his Doctor of Letters from Drew University with a dissertation on environmental themes in a medieval legend. His criticism, poetry, and fairy tales have appeared in various print and digital publications.

Jamie Hunter is a 21 year old Peace and Justice Studies student at Selkirk College. Jamie is the co-founder of Stop Ecocide Canada, the Canadian branch of the Stop Ecocide campaign, which aims to make ecocide an international criminal law. Jamie is also an organizer with Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion in Nelson, BC, and has been involved in many other environmental and social justice causes. He is currently planning to attend COP26 in Glasgow to help advocate for ecocide to become an international crime.

Zaynab Mohammed is a Performing Poet, Musician, and Activist living in BC Canada. Her work focuses on youth empowerment and activism through art. With Lebanese, Iraqi and Palestinian roots, she allows the pain to mesh with what is possible in the realms of healing, of creating new ways forward, so that the past is understood and not repeated.

Makram Daou is a Lebanese Visual Communicator and Expression Advocate living in Germany. His art focuses on the connections between the various dimensions of life, how our humanity stems from embracing our vulnerabilities and how we each carry the keys to open our closed doors.

Meredith Macdonald's difficult youth shaped every aspect of who she is. After years spent trying to make sense of her own world, she carries deep empathy for younger people, especially females, who struggle alone, yet profoundly desire acceptance, and attachments. Today, Meredith is a student, she writes for an online magazine, Living Here, and continues to write about living in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver- the one place she understands better than most people.

Matthew Johnson holds an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies from Hacettepe University (Turkey) and a BA in Journalism from the University of Maryland, where he began his activism organizing against war, poverty, racism, mass incarceration, and gender-based violence. During the Occupy Movement, he linked his activism to conflict resolution and restorative justice, introducing those practices to the Occupy encampments in D.C. He has published several articles and contributed to many books related to gender, racial, social, and restorative justice and is co-author/editor (with Dr. Laura Finley) of the 2018 book Trumpism: The Politics of Gender in a Post-Propititious America. He is also a contributor to PeaceVoice and The Good Men Project. He has served as an educator in a variety of contexts, most recently in the virtual space as a cross-cultural dialogue facilitator and trainer for Soliya. He currently works as a User Experience Researcher.

A YOUTH-LED WAR FOR CLIMATE PEACE: BOOK REVIEW, POLICY PROPOSAL, GRASSROOTS VISION

GRAEME LEE ROWLANDS

Last fall, policy analyst and activist Seth Klein, brother of Naomi and son of Bonnie and Michael (all well known in their own ways), published *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*. Reinvigorated this spring with the launch of his spinoff Climate Emergency Unit, the book is a pragmatic argument for rapid, transformative climate action in the style of a Green New Deal. It's squarely focused on Canada but American and international readers should also find it relevant. In a society focused on (and often paralyzed by) barriers and problems, *A Good War* brings a fresh angle to the conversation with its central premise that, actually, we have done this before. We did it during and after World War II.

Klein has personal and intergenerational roots in peace advocacy and war resistance dating back to conflicts in early 20th century Europe (his grandparents), the Vietnam War (his parents), and nuclear disarmament campaigns of the 1980's (his younger self). He starts the book by acknowledging personal discomfort with promoting a war-oriented framing, before explaining why he thinks we need it.

"I come to this analogy uneasily," Klein says, "[yet] I am now convinced that to confront a climate emergency a

wartime approach is needed, and moreover, that our wartime experience should be embraced as an instructive story. Climate breakdown requires a new mindset – to mobilize all of society, galvanize our politics and fundamentally remake our economy."

Though initially reluctant, Canada punched far above its weight among allied forces in the years following its 1939 entry into the war. More than one million Canadians served out of a total population of only around 11 million and, on the home front, the government transformed nearly every sector of society and the economy at breakneck speed only to remake it once again after the conflict ended. Over twelve chapters (plus conclusion and epilogue), Klein's book covers various dimensions of society that were at the core of Canada's WWII response and are, today, at the core of our ability to act on climate. He delves into then-and-now dynamics surrounding public opinion, inequality, regional differences, corporate adaptability and the role of government, labor and employment, financing, the roles of Indigenous nations, media, youth, and civil society leaders, mistakes and wrongdoings, and perhaps most importantly, the public and political mindset that is needed to accomplish things few thought possible. After reading *A Good War*, I am convinced and ready to stand with Klein in saying

“let’s do it again” – this time to make peace with our planet and forge a more just society.

Overall conclusions aside, the reason I picked this book up in the first place was to get a big-picture perspective on a still-little experiment. Through my work with Wildsight, a conservation, education, and sustainability organization based in southeast British Columbia, I’ve spent the last year launching the Youth Climate Corps – a program to connect young people in need of opportunity with the massive amount of work that needs to be done on climate. Sounds like the Green New Deal, right? As the proposed U.S. Civilian Climate Corps (another early 1900’s remake) gains steam in Congress and the White House with potential to harness billions of dollars and millions of young people, there doesn’t yet appear to be any concrete Canadian analogue. The Youth Climate Corps (YCC) concept does make it into Klein’s book as one of his many astute policy recommendations, and I agree that this idea needs to be scaled up to a wartime level in Canada, the U.S., and elsewhere. As Klein says of youth and the climate crisis, “how we confront the largest collective action puzzle of human existence will be the story of their lives. We would do well to fully engage them in the exercise as soon as possible.”

For now, we’re doing our best to build a nationally relevant proof-of-concept in our rural corner of the country. As a scrappy team of non-profit employees and volunteers fighting to win grants and assemble other piecemeal support, we work with what we can get. Our goal is to fill local holes to greenlight or enhance climate projects that are stalled or challenged to reach their full potential. We strive to be the missing puzzle piece.

Last year, our inaugural YCC crew of fourteen people ages 19-29 got paid for four months to complete a variety of projects in the City of Nelson and the surrounding area. After an introductory retreat, they spent the first

half of the season working on physical projects with ongoing training and regular debriefs. The crew cleared accumulated forest fuels out of a provincial park to protect ecological values and Nelson’s main water source from wildfire (perhaps the greatest climate risk facing this area). They worked with local farmers to boost food production and test new permaculture design practices. They hauled old, dumped tires off local riverbanks and replaced them with native trees. Once winter arrived, crew members shifted their focus to designing and implementing creative projects to engage local leaders and community members.

This year, we’re hoping to add a second crew in a new location, do more good work, and get more people in more places to come on board. If we can quickly launch something like this with relatively little, you can too. Imagine what we could all do together. If you want to see a Youth Climate Corps where you live, let’s talk. You can contact me at graeme@wildsight.ca

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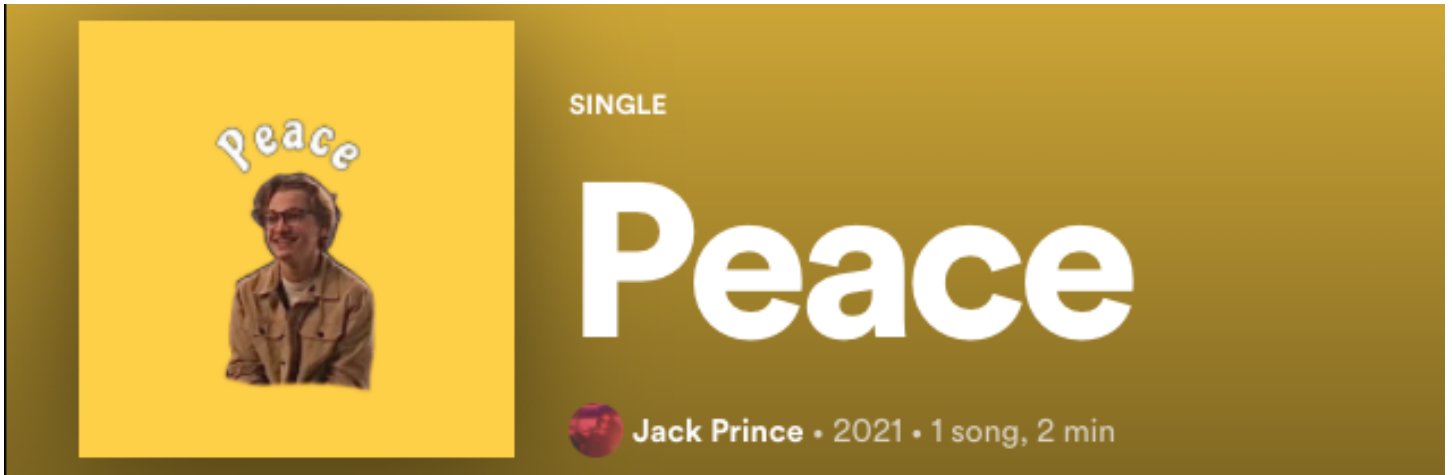
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Since I was around the age of 8 I've wanted to make music. My father and my grandfather both used to make music and I thought that I should carry on the old Prince family legacy. The family business is running the Gaslight Melodrama (boo the villain, cheer the hero) and entertaining is in my blood, making others happy is a great feeling.

I first started playing in my friend's garage when I was 12. I got a call from my friend Fox asking if I wanted to play in a band (he only asked because I had lied saying that I could play guitar), of course I said yes right away because it was the start of something I've wanted to do for the last 4 years!

I learned a little bit of guitar and went to practice a week after I got the call. The band consisted of me (Jack Prince), our singer (Fox Gonzales), our drummer (Maddix Wilson), and our bassist (Kaeden Digirolamo). We were "Blackout". They soon found out that I couldn't play, so they put me on bass/keyboard. That band lasted around 7 months. We were terrible.

Around 6 months later, I got another call from my good friend Dylan White. He asked if I would like to join a band with him and his friends. At this point I had had a decent amount of time playing/learning guitar so I said yes. I was very nervous to join this band because I was the youngest. It consisted of me on guitar, our bassist

(Dylan White), our drummer (Colby Bracket), our singer (Ruben Ornelas), our pianist (Parker Sutherland), and our manager/musical director (Noah White). We were "Loneliest In The Room". That band didn't last for that long unfortunately, around 4-5 months (but we have talks of starting the band up again with new members). And that leaves us to today. Right now I'm in a band called "Wholesome Goodness" which consists of me on guitar and Kaya Leyendecker singing. We have made quite a few songs and plan to release them sometime soon.

Peace (on Spotify) was made on Christmas of 2020. I had just gotten a new bass so I could start to make some REAL songs. Everything in the song describes how I felt on Christmas. All of my worries and stress and anxiety from what 2020 was had all gone away. I couldn't put it into words so I just started playing my guitar and out came "Peace." I immediately realized the potential it had and recorded it, everyone could use more peace.



YOUTH LIBERATION AND MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

EDWARD HASBROUCK

When I was invited to testify before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service in 2019, I began my prepared statement as follows:

“You have described this hearing as being about ‘Expanding Selective Service registration to all Americans,’ by which you mean whether to expand draft registration to young women as well as young men. But that you could describe a requirement applicable only to young people as being one that applies to ‘all’ people is indicative of the profound and unexamined ageism that underlies [the] system of conscription.... It is because of this ageism that opposition to the draft has been central to movements for youth liberation.”

I don’t need to, and won’t presume to, tell young people why ageism is wrong. As an older ally, my role is to support them in their resistance and their efforts to liberate themselves, and to try to raise the consciousness of other older people about our ageism. In particular, I hope that this article will reach some older people who oppose war and military conscription but haven’t thought about ageism, youth liberation, or how they relate to the draft, other sources of oppression, and other struggles for liberation.

There are many good reasons to oppose conscription. The draft {coerces} {young people} {to kill or be killed} {at

the direction of the state}. Each element of that summary is a reason to oppose any draft. Some people (anarchists, libertarians, and other anti-authoritarians) oppose a draft because they oppose state coercion; some people (pacifists and other anti-militarists) oppose a draft because they oppose wars in general or the particular wars for which soldiers are being drafted; and some people (young people and their allies in the movement for youth liberation) oppose a draft because it is ageist.

I’m an atheist, an anarchist, and a pacifist, any of which would be sufficient reason to resist the draft. But my first and primary motive for draft resistance was and is my opposition to ageism.

The Selective Service System is, by definition and intent, selective. But in no respect is its selectivity so absolute as with respect to age (and currently gender, although that may change soon if Selective Service registration is expanded to include young women as well as young men). Men ages 18-26 are the only U.S. citizens other than those under court supervision for having been convicted of crimes who are required to report to the government every time they change their address, although few comply with, or are even aware of, this Selective Service requirement.

Draft resisters are often dismissed as “having issues” with their parents. To those who see the claims of the state to authority over their newly-adult bodies as resting on the same patriarchal ageist basis as their parents’ claims to authority over their bodies as children, that’s precisely the point.

Ageism also underlies the common argument that a threat to conscript the children of the powerful would turn them against war, out of fear for their children’s or other young people’s lives. This is an ethically repugnant argument even aside from its ageism: It is tantamount to arguing that we should use the children of the rich as human shields against war, or that we should kidnap the children of people in power, hold them hostage, threaten to kill them, and try to ransom them for peace. And like the draft itself, this would impose on young potential draftees the burden of their elders’ errors in making war.

The injustice of the draft has been central to consciousness-raising among young people about ageism. “The military draft must be abolished” was part of the original manifesto of the Youth Liberation collective of Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1970, which fifty years later remains the single most influential and widely-accepted statement of the demands of the youth liberation movement.

The connections between draft resistance and youth liberation were perhaps clearest in the adoption of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which extended voting rights to all citizens 18 and older.

The 26th Amendment was a direct response to the argument that it was unfair to draft people too young to have a vote in whether to go to war or whether or how to conduct a draft. This argument was so persuasive, even to voters who wanted to continue the war and the draft, that they amended the Constitution with

unprecedented rapidity – while continuing to draft only young people.

Understanding that for some people draft resistance is part of the movement for youth liberation can, and should, inform our anti-draft and anti-war organizing strategies and goals. By wielding the power of direct action and the withholding of labor and consent, draft resistance can not only constrain the ability of the state to wage unpopular wars, but can empower young people to realize that they have, as my mentor Dave Dellinger titled one of his books, “More Power Than We Know.”

What am I doing in the anti-draft and youth liberation movements at age 60? Why should that be any more of a question, or a surprise, than why white people are working to try to overcome white supremacy in themselves and others, or why men are trying to support feminism? Ageism is a problem of old people, and we old people have a responsibility, if we recognize that problem, to try to do something about it.

Ageism within anti-draft movements and organizations has been a pervasive problem, a source of recurring struggle, and an impediment to realizing the full success of draft resistance. There has been little application to anti-draft activism of the ideas about “allyship” developed by white anti-racists, feminist men, and other solidarity movements. With the issue of the draft once again on the agenda of Congress and the Supreme Court, it’s time to apply those lessons.

The role of older allies is not to “save” young people from the draft and other forms of ageist oppression, but to help them free themselves and help them free all of us, young and old, from the draft and the larger, longer, and less popular wars that a draft enables.

It should go without saying that the primary victims of the draft in the USA are not draftees but the much larger numbers of people, mainly civilians, against whom draftees are deployed to wage war around the world, and the civilians at home, especially women and children, who are impacted by the violent masculinity in which soldiers are trained. That this is not taken for granted, and that draftees are conceptualized primarily as passive victims of the draft rather than as potentially empowered agents of obstruction of the war machine, is symptomatic of the ageism of most older observers.

The ageist view of young people as “victims” in need of protection from the draft denies them agency and blinds older people to the success of young draft resisters’ nonviolent noncooperation with a system that seeks not only to oppress them but to weaponize them to oppress others. Draft resistance is about young people protecting us all from war.

Since 1980, widespread but largely closeted and unnoticed resistance to draft registration has won a profound victory over the U.S government and the war machine: It has rendered draft registration unenforceable and prevented a draft. But that victory is only partial. The greater victory will be when the failure of draft registration and the consequent unavailability of a draft as a military “fallback” option is widely enough recognized that U.S. war planning and war making begin to be constrained accordingly.

The failure of older allies to publicize and follow through on the success of draft registration resistance in preventing a draft, and thereby to realize the potential of that resistance to rein in military planning and adventurism, is directly attributable to their ageism.

Misconceiving their goal from the start as protecting “vulnerable” (read: powerless) young people from the draft rather than helping young people protect the

world from wars that depend on young people as warriors, older ageist anti-draft activists have assumed that as long as the threat of a draft has been eliminated, there is no reason for anti-draft activism. As a result, they redirected their priorities for activism away from the issue of the draft, just when the success of draft registration resistance had brought it to the brink of a larger victory. Since the government was never forced to admit that draft registration had failed, it has continued to plan and initiate war after war on the false but unchallenged assumption that, if it needs to do so, it can always fall back on a draft.

More generally, the role of old people in the movement for youth liberation, as part of the larger struggle for peace and justice, is to raise the consciousness of ourselves and other old people about our ageism, to strive to work as allies to young people seeking their own liberation, and to struggle continually within ourselves against our own ageism.

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ABOUT THE REDRESS PROJECT

XOCHILT RAMIREZ

What is the REDress Project?

The REDress Project is an art installation – a collection of hundreds of empty red dresses hung in public spaces – designed to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The project has been exhibited in public spaces across Canada and the USA, providing an aesthetic response and visual reminder of the more than 1000 loved ones who have lost their lives and the families and friends who love and miss them still.

Métis artist, Jaime Black, writes, “Through the installation I hope to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence.”

The permanent exhibit hangs at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba. For more information, news coverage and a video produced by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, please see <https://www.jaimeblackartist.com/exhibitions/>

My gift to this world is the ability to create connections, between people, ideas, and stories.

I am writing this piece directly to you, who are reading it and taking the time to make your own connections about what is going on in this place we call home.

I arrived here eight years ago thinking I knew, from books and my personal background, what it could mean to live in a land of settlers, and not really seeing Indigenous people. It seems this is what most people here do – live their privileges without asking where they came from – but I knew I couldn't be the only one questioning what has really happened since the Europeans arrived in America, and what the effects of that history are at the present time. That is why I felt the need to start connecting the dots and mapping out facts and history, getting more confident with my English and sharing my writing.

That is also why this 5th of May I wore a REDress, humbly following the initiative promoted by our local Touchstones Museum. I took the time to hang a dress at my house, pick up a book about reconciliation for me and my daughter at the library. There is no revolution possible without education, my Latin American heritage taught me, and we have all the tools to research our answers. Starting to think critically may make you lose some friends; the ones I'll see on the patio because it's 5 de Mayo and it's just another excuse to have a margarita.

without even knowing what the date means. (Do you feel less sympathy for me now that I sound cynical?) But I am no longer looking to please everyone. I feel accepted in this community and it's my will to dive straight into activism, with artistic production or even just with a friendly chat when I meet you on Baker street.

"Why are you dressed up in red?" somebody asks me.
"it's for the Indigenous women ..."

But they don't let me finish, because they don't really care.

Walking from my home in Fairview to downtown, I did not see a single red dress hanging outdoors and it didn't really surprise me, but it left a bitter feeling to my day. Especially after participating to the online event led by Lesley Garlow, Indigenous Educator at the museum, the disappointment/disillusion about how few in the Nelson community seemed interested in indigenous rights was quite intense. There were literally five people present online, two of them members of the museum board; those numbers speak alone. It felt like being part of a small but dedicated minority who wants to promote change and awareness on a large scale.

I am aware that schools and institutions are working on this, but of course it takes a community effort to shake the majority from their indifference. Walking or driving by Nelson City Hall where the Redresses are displayed, I heard of people not knowing at all what it was about, and heard comments like "It's past history, we have to move on....".

What really shocks me is this: not being able to put ourselves into the same situation. For example, when we talk about residential schools, it's enough to ask anybody: "How would you feel if your kids were taken away from you in a place you didn't want them to be?" to obtain a strong reflection and a clear answer. So why is it so hard

to take the time to re/think what is being taught or hidden in your Canadian history books?

I am a new immigrant in this country, studying right now the booklet provided by the government to pass the citizenship test, and in those pages, I see gaps and omissions about the darkest chapter of this country's history and present situation. So, I simply try to fill them up by informing myself, asking questions about who is dedicating their life and energies to actively change the community's feelings around these topics. I look around myself and participate so I can be the change I wish to see, a model for our youth to grow up with.

Because this is indigenous land, we are all guests, no matter for how long our ancestors have been working on this soil, building and developing the current economy. This land was sacred and protected by the way of life of Indigenous peoples. Colonization brought the Big Death, a death of cultures and languages, memories and traditions. But not all is lost, and by unifying our efforts and voices to a common cause there is hope for a better future.

I saw in the ReDress a universal metaphor of murdered women, the sacrality of nature being raped by a system who wants to keep profiting by exploiting the earth. To not be a silent ally of this sick system, we need to step forward, talk openly with our youth, rediscover with them what is being purposely cut out from schoolbooks. Until recent times you wouldn't have the possibility of having these conversations, so why don't we take it now?

It feels like being an activist around here is a "niche" thing, but it is the complete opposite: it concerns all of us and now, more than ever, we need a strong form of collective unity to re/write history. We need to be connected to fight the fear that is dividing us more.

With my 8-year-old daughter, we took the opportunity to create a drawing and a collage of newspaper articles about what happened to the ReDress project in Nelson. I explained to her what it meant in the first place, and then told her that it had been vandalized. Our collage is not the greatest piece of art, and it is quite creepy too, but as her father walked through the door and asked us what we were doing the answer was clear: “re-writing Her-story”.

We want her to know and understand what is really going in her homeland, so she can grow up as an informed and activist citizen who'll always do her best to help others.

This is also my hope for you and your families, my humble gift to the tām x̄w̄ ulaʔ x̄w̄, where I am so lucky to live.

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PLANTING SEEDS: AN INTERVIEW WITH ARIEL OTTERSTAD AND MARK DELLAGIACOMA

INTERVIEWED BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

Ariel Otterstad is the Associate Pastor of Living Word Lutheran Church in Katy, Texas. Mark Dellagiacomma is Living Word's Coordinator of Children's Ministry. Each have decades of experience in youth and children's ministry, including engaging youth on peace and justice issues.

GE: How did you become involved with youth ministry?

AO: My journey in youth ministry started when I was a youth myself. I was on a youth board that ran events for our synod, and was also the youth representative to our church's Synod Council. After high school, I volunteered with the middle school youth at my home congregation. When I moved away to finish college, life took a different turn. Still, every job I had after college involved helping youth discern their future. I began professional ministry as the part-time youth minister for the church I attended in Texarkana. The more I was there, the more I felt called to do that in a full-time capacity.

Then my grant funded position at the local school district was cut. I applied to two youth ministry positions, never heard back from one, and was quickly hired by the other. So I relocated my family to Seguin, Texas to become a full-time youth minister. I often joke that youth ministry is a gateway drug: you either quit ministry entirely or move on to harder stuff. Whether that involves

going to seminary and becoming an ordained minister like I did, or moving to positions at larger churches with more responsibility like Mark did—you're either in or you're out. It can be a very rewarding job, but it's also a very hard job.

MD: To go way back, my grandma was what I call the queen of the altar guild. She did everything for our church. So that example instilled in me a love for service. When I was in high school, I served on my church council, helping with and representing our youth ministry program. Back then, many people saw a call to ministry for me. I did not feel that call at the time, so I joined the Army instead. While I was in the Army, though, I did programs with kids at local schools—mentorship programs, things like that, and just loved it. A year after getting out of the Army, I got my first youth ministry job at a church in the Dallas area. That was a part-time job, but I left that for a full-time job at another church. Twenty years later, I'm still doing youth and family ministry.

GE: How do you incorporate peace and justice issues into youth ministry?

AO: Well, for us, living in Texas, carefully. We live in a place where there are very polarizing viewpoints on life—

be they political, cultural, or socio-economic. Our job is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Obviously, leaders of other faith traditions have similar but differently nuanced jobs.) Justice, peace, and love are prevailing themes in Christianity. You will not hear a sermon, you will not learn a lesson from me that doesn't have those integrated into it. But if I'm just a guns-a-blazing, crazy Old Testament prophet in people's faces, they will instantaneously get defensive and close off their ears and hearts. I know that a lot of social justice leaders want change and they want it now—and I understand that. But I can't force people to change. I have to pull them along. I have to drop the bread crumbs. I have to plant the seeds.

It's a lot easier with youth than it is with adults. They see a lot of the world, and they experience it so much differently than I did as a youth. They have a more diverse set of friends. For them, technology has always been a prevalent part of their lives. Most of them don't understand why persecuting LGBTQ+ populations is a thing, because they've always know people who are LGBTQ+, because in their lifetime it's always been okay to identify as that. Even when I was a youth, it wasn't okay to be gay, and I grew up in Oregon. We still weren't there, and these kids really are. Most of them. Some of the kids, who are raised in particular environments where they hear messages that are contrary to love everyone and accept everyone, aren't necessarily there.

A lot of what we do as youth ministers is (1) education: do Bible studies, have conversations, talk about what these things look like; and (2) try to expose them to more of the world: be it mission trips or volunteering locally, so they can see that not everybody in Katy, Texas lives in a gated community. Some people are living in a lot more poverty. It's very important to emphasize that when we go on mission trips or do service projects, we're not going in to "save" these other people. The point is to build relationships and to meet needs. We have needs, too. We

can learn and grow more from the people we are working with than they can from us.

I really think that our job is planting seeds, and I don't know when those seeds are going to germinate and grow. I'm just going to plant them everywhere I possibly can—as broadly, as widely, as densely as I can—I'm going to plant those seeds. And at some point, hopefully, they will grow into a beautiful plant of peace and justice.

MD: I love the planting seeds metaphor, because I think that's it. We have opportunities to be around these kids and to meet them where they are. To expect them to believe what I believe, how I believe it, and why I believe it—whether that's my thoughts about social justice, or why I believe in God, or why I'm Lutheran—that's not the task. I want to put things in place so that they can learn and grow on their own. I want to create an environment where they can be around people who are different, people with different sexual identities or of different races. If I'm just grouping all my white kids together, we're not going to be as exposed to different things. That's why taking them on mission trips and just going outside of their comfort zone are important.

There are people I know who were in my youth group as high school kids, and they were not out. Now they're out and proud. Maybe they didn't need to come out back then; maybe it wasn't their time. But I promoted an environment where it was safe—where kids weren't going to talk bad about each other or make gay jokes. They weren't going to call people stupid or retarded, they weren't going to use words that are hurtful, because you never know who's in your midst. Years later, I was at a camp where one of my former kids was a counselor. One of his kids said, "That's so gay," and he corrected him on the spot. Seed planted, right?

It's a touchy subject, though. These are other people's kids, and I'm not telling those people how to parent.

When I'm exposing kids to things and trying to broaden their horizons, I'm not telling them their parents ideas are wrong. I'm just saying that there's more out there.

Back during the Obama administration, I was teaching a confirmation class, and some kids started saying that they hated the current president and wished he would die. I told them that wishing someone dead wasn't Christian. Regardless of your politics, that hate wasn't right. Some of the parents came back and accused me of pushing a liberal agenda. I said, "No, did your kids tell you what they said? They said that they wished that man dead. So either they came up with that on their own, or you're teaching them that it's okay to wish people dead." That was the end of that conversation. I'm not pushing agendas, but I'm trying to broaden horizons, plant seeds—even if it's just the seed for those four kids of not wishing someone dead.

AO: I have a similar story, actually. When I lived in Seguin, I would talk with my youth about peace, justice, and loving your neighbor. One of my youth got mad and told his mother that he didn't want to come back to youth group because all I was doing was "promoting my personal liberal agenda." I explained to his mom that I didn't directly talk about politics at all—if modern day topics came up, it was because one of the youth brought them up—but I did talk about doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God (Micah 6: 6-8) and I talked about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the imprisoned (Matthew 25: 34-45). If he had a problem with that liberal agenda, though, he'd need to take it up with Jesus, because I was just quoting. His mother said, "I will take care of this," and he never missed youth group again. A few years after that incident, I got a message from him on Facebook. He was applying to the Peace Corps and wanted me to be a reference for him. You cannot make a bigger 180° than that young man did.

GE: How have the youth that you work with inspired you?

AO: I'm inspired by our youth regularly. They're loving and compassionate human beings. Given the opportunity, I think that they can inspire and transform the world. I've had youth who came to me with ideas on how to do things to make the world better. I've had kids who found nonprofit organizations that they thought were worthwhile and wanted to support.

At my former congregation, my youth found out about the 30-hour famine concept (a fast to raise awareness about hunger). They came to me asking to do it. We did it for three years in a row, and they loved it. As part of that, we gathered food for our local food pantry and walked it over (about six blocks). The youth had to figure out how to transport and carry all those cans without cars, because if you're living in a developing nation, you don't have a Suburban to throw everything into.

We have a youth who was concerned about homelessness in the Houston metro area. She wanted to put together care kits with snacks, bottled water, and hygiene items. There were about 200 of those kits, I think. A lot of the kids kept them in their cars, so that if they saw somebody, they could hand them one. Also, Mark's wife serves a congregation where a large portion of the congregation are people experiencing homelessness. They were able to use those kits as well.

MD: The young lady that Pastor Ariel was just talking about with the kits for the homeless, she is constantly wanting to learn more about religion and other people. We also have a young man in our congregation, a sophomore in high school, who's known since the fifth grade that he wants to be a fireman. His life is going to be service to others. He shows that around the church. He comes and helps with everything he can. He's at the volunteer fire department all the time. To see his heart is amazing.

At a church I served before, a young lady was going through some tough times. Her parents were getting

divorced and she wasn't in a good spot. There was a boy who didn't know her very well but could tell that she was hurting, so he sat next to her just to be in her presence while she cried at her table. A friendship developed from that. Now, I'm trained to do that. I see a kid hurting from across the room, and I'm trained to go talk to that kid. When other young people start doing that and start caring for others, that's a big thing. When you see your youth become the people that you knew they could be, you thought they would be, you hoped they would be, but they exceed that—that's inspiring.

AO: As a proud mom, I'm inspired by my own children. My son Patrick knits and crochets, and he was on this stocking cap making binge one winter. He made about a hundred stocking caps. What were we going to do with those? Well again, Mark's wife works with a lot of people experiencing homelessness. After about a month on the streets, those hats are trashed. But for that month, they're warm. So now Patrick has donated hundreds of hats to her church. We've also shipped them to nonprofit partners in New York, Tennessee, Oregon—various different places.

MD: It's similar for me. My ministry has changed in the last nine years since I became a parent. I see what my daughter has become—as a nine-year-old, the social justice that she fights for. I'm proud of her. She's been to more marches and made more posters for things than I ever did at that age. But it's things that she wants to do. It's women's rights marches. She's a girl, and she wants girls to have power.

AO: Those are the things that inspire me, because those are the things that come out of their spiritual gifts, their caring, and their compassion. I think my favorite thing is when youth come to me and say, "We have this idea." I'm not the future of the world; I'm 40 years old. These kids can come up and transform it. So when those little glimpses of transformation pop through, that's when I get inspired.

THE POWERFUL LINK BETWEEN SUCCESSFUL CLIMATE ACTIVISM AND PEACE STUDIES SKILLS

JAMIE HUNTER

It's been two years now since I first got involved in the climate movement, and I can't believe how fast my life has changed and how many amazing things have been accomplished.

Back in 2019 I helped organize the biggest protest ever in Nelson, BC's history. Around 2,000 people joined the strike in a town with a population of just 10,000. Per capita, this makes it the biggest climate protest organized in the whole of Canada!

Later that year I travelled to Vancouver with the rest of Nelson's amazing Fridays for Future (FFF) team where we led a march of 15,000 people alongside Greta Thunberg, and youth organizers from across the western provinces.

Then the world changed, and I shifted gears into co-founding Stop Ecocide Canada. This was a really difficult time - having in-person gatherings suspended seriously changed the way that FFF was able to work, and felt like a step backwards from where we had been before. Despite that, or perhaps because of it, being a part of Stop Ecocide Canada was an amazing journey. I personally met (over Zoom of course!) with over 20 Federal MPs, across party lines, all of whom have voiced their support for the movement. Without the pandemic, and the transition to online meetings, this might not

have been possible, and it certainly opened my eyes to the possibilities of making change beyond our small town. We're now talking about getting this idea into the platforms of federal parties, and it's not a pipe dream, it's already happening.

I represented Canada at Mock COP26, the youth-led alternative to the cancelled COP26. The high-level statement which resulted from that has now been shared with political leaders around the globe.

Of course, I did none of this alone. Throughout this journey, I've been surrounded by people who are also pushing for the same things, and every win we have is a collective one. Nevertheless, both the FFF and Stop Ecocide teams are under 10 people, and despite these small numbers, we have managed to make so many changes.

But as I reflect on all this, the question arises. How did this happen? How did all this work get accomplished? Some of the answers are obvious, and have been explored by others in great detail already. As a species, our collective awareness of climate issues has grown - in many ways there has never been a better time to be a climate activist. The energy and enthusiasm of the Fridays for Future movement was obvious, but it couldn't

have happened without 50+ years of awareness-building before it. The movement brought climate issues to the forefront of public awareness, but it didn't create them. A certain amount of what we have achieved over the past two years was luck and good timing, and this is the case with most major movements throughout history.

And yet people tell me that what we are doing in Nelson is different. Youth climate groups across Canada look to what our local group does for inspiration. Other activist groups are blown away by what Stop Ecocide Canada has achieved in a few short months.

It is my deep conviction that a part of this is down to the way our group operates. Within the original team of FFF organizers, half of us were Peace and Justice Studies students. By unspoken agreement, we brought these skills to climate organizing and our group developed in a way which other groups did not. We never discussed this officially as a group, but in practice it meant that the group evolved to be open, kind, and grounded in practices of listening, accepting, and caring for each other. This created a space in which ideas could be shared, without judgment from the rest of the group.

Because of our peace studies skills, when conflict did inevitably arise our group had a way of handling it that I believe was healthy and led to the continuation of the group in circumstances that would probably have led to permanent division in the group otherwise. When the conflict arose, we held an in-person group circle to allow everyone to feel heard, and for their ideas to be expressed. This is a technique I learned in part on the Peace Studies program that I attended at Selkirk College and also from my upbringing, where circle discussions are a natural part of family life. These tactics are very much linked to the concept of power for peace, creating shared responsibilities, and giving a way for everyone to have input, as opposed to a top-down structure of power-over. The group deliberately used this approach of

power of peace, and we have found it to be far more effective than a top-down system, with people feeling heard, valued, and empowered.

We all have such enormous capacity to create change, and to lead actions, but unfortunately there are many institutions which seem to be built to crush this capacity. I'd like to think that our local group does the opposite of that, building people up and offering flexibility, instead of pushing them down into rigid patterns of behaviour, controlled from the top. Our group is definitely de-centralized and circular in nature.

Being the person I am, it was only natural that I felt the need to take this approach when I co-founded Stop Ecocide Canada, and started meeting with MPs. In those first days, our team was very small (really only two people), and we took a lobby training with the Nelson chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL). Their goal as a group is to put pressure on politicians to adopt climate solutions, particularly carbon pricing. They conduct meetings in a very specific and organized way, which they termed the "CCL Method." This method involves beginning the meeting by expressing gratitude for something the politician has done, followed by some discussion on the issue you are bringing to them, and finally, an ask of them. In my experience, following this script has helped meetings run smoothly and efficiently, and I have no doubt that it is this method that has made MPs so receptive to the idea of ecocide law.

The gratitude piece, in particular, is key here. Each time we express gratitude to an MP, I can see the positive response, in both their facial expressions and body language. They relax, listen more, and really seem to deeply appreciate us taking the time to express gratitude to them. I know that they attend a large number of meetings which consist mostly of angry constituents shouting at them about something, and they infrequently receive recognition for the work they

do. Providing this makes them more open and receptive to what we have to say.

I believe it has been this gentle approach to climate activism that has led me and others in my group to be able to achieve the incredible amount that we have, in such a short space of time. I learnt so many of these skills through the Peace Studies program, and in my mind the two spheres of Peace Studies and activism are very closely tied - almost inseparable. If we activists want to succeed in our goals, it is so important to take a step back, look at how we are going about it, and adjust. Marches and protests are great tools for drawing attention to an issue, but the background work and the way we do it is crucial too. For example, during the recent global climate strike, our local group spent a great deal of time considering how we might present ourselves in a way that would feel non-confrontational in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and how people feel about protests in the wake of this crisis.

We spent literally hours organizing our protest so that there were never more than 10 people in a group (as they arrived, they were taken by co-ordinators to different places in the town, all nearby) and we asked all protesters to wear masks and remain six feet apart, even though we were outside. We also ran a newspaper article ahead of the action explaining to people in the town what we were doing to be respectful of COVID, and why we felt it was so important to go ahead and strike during the pandemic. And finally, we asked a lecturer in Peace Studies to instruct all the coordinators several days before the strike in conflict de-escalation methods (CLARA) and we reminded them of this in the pre-meeting on the day of the strike. This method was actually used on the day to great effect on someone who in fact ended up changing his mind completely and joining the action!

Of course, there are a huge array of tactics at our disposal to create change. Up until now, the tactics I have used in the groups I have been involved in have been very non-confrontational and mostly focused on creating change at a government level, but there is certainly space for other actions. I recently attended Extinction Rebellion Vancouver's Spring Rebellion, and this opened my eyes to other ways of raising awareness. Extinction Rebellion, by its very nature, uses civil disobedience as a tool to create change. At the Spring Rebellion, activists occupied key pieces of infrastructure in Vancouver, and several arrests were made. Some people are strongly against the tactics used by Extinction Rebellion, viewing them as too extreme, and this is OK, intentional in fact. One of Extinction Rebellion's main goals is to shift the Overton Window of public perception. By getting arrested, they make students marching in the streets demanding action seem very reasonable. By setting a target date of zero emissions by 2025, they make 2030 seem reasonable, and 2050 seem ridiculously lacking.

From my perspective, this type of action serves the purpose of communicating the urgency of the climate crisis, and makes it clear that people want to see action now, in a way that other actions cannot necessarily accomplish. It is my firm belief that we need many types of action in order to succeed in creating change. When I speak to MPs, they often ask if there is support from their constituents. Civil disobedience, along with large marches, petitions, and letters, show them that there is support. When they then meet with groups like Stop Ecocide we can give them the solutions they need to address the problem.

We know that action is imperative. Climate disasters continue to escalate around the world. Here in BC, forest fires are of particularly concern, and we frequently experience smoky summers, where the air quality can become worse than most of the world's major cities. We

also know that we cannot flip a switch and stop the negative effects of climate change. It will take years for carbon already released into the atmosphere to dissipate and for levels to return to closer to normal. Canada is warming at twice the average global rate, and in the north, the rate is three times higher. Action is urgently needed, but we must make sure that this action is lasting. I believe that only by incorporating all these different tactics, and voices from an array of people, can we accomplish this.

The methods I have learned in peace studies have been inextricably linked with the most successful campaigns I have been involved in. Of course, it is worth remembering that I live in a part of Canada which is not on the front lines of facing the climate emergency, and this work would be much harder in areas with, for example, large-scale resource development projects and/or greater dependency on fossil fuels for job opportunities. And yet the fact remains that with both Fridays for Future and Stop Ecocide, we have achieved so much in such a short amount of time. For me, Peace Studies theory will always play a central role in how I approach activism and life in general. I think it is this approach that has made all the difference.



IC: Makram Daou

It's so easy to hate. To see
 difference of thought, of color, of lifestyle.
 Hate, finds a way to put an end to comprehension, to
 thought provoking
 questions of why hate was welcomed.

Welcomed to the room and part of the discussion. Hate
 knows how to bend thoughts in half. Leaving only
 particles of knowing, left for seeing. Hate. Your neighbor,
 your uncle, your lawmakers. Give your energy to this
 emotion, while not doing what it takes to learn, to grow,
 to participate.

Hate overshadows love. No air left
 to liberate your views. No space present,
 to feel compassion for another.

If I had to choose one emotion unworthy, I'd choose
 hate, but I know every emotion holds benefit, if we let
 them teach us, beyond face value. Hate is all it takes
 to convince you, or me, to pick up a weapon and
 fight, against those we hate.

Perhaps hate is synonymous with enemy, with not
 knowing, with fear and uncertainty. Because we can all
 be painted into a shadow, be wrapped into the perfect
 meaning of why I am against you, why you hate me.

Hate is a silent general commanding civil citizens to act
 unworthy of their humanity.

To take, to hurt, and to deny
 others' well being because of their looks, their wealth,
 their political stance. Not a day goes by without
 narratives to keep us feeling separate from each other.

Hate robs us, from seeing beyond our perspective,
 it kills our curiosity of widening our circle, allowing
 the 'enemy' in. Hate sits at my doorstep, pleading
 to let it into my home. Hate has become a tragedy,
 leading minds in a trajectory of fearing each other,
 name calling and treating life with much less than
 respect and kindness. Hate can be an ally, to dissolve
 itself.

Hate needs to be dismantled. It whispers to ears that
 listen. Take me apart. Deconstruct me, disassemble my
 grip on you. Go beyond hate and meet your humanity.

CONTENT NOTICE:

The following deals with potentially sensitive subject matter, including drug use, mental illness, and gender-based violence.

SORELLA HOUSE

MEREDITH MACDONALD

Sorella Housing for Women opened its secure, locked doors for tenants, most sent by referral, in the spring of 2011. I moved into Sorella in June of 2011 and I lived there for seven years. At the time, the women who were eligible to live in Sorella were described in newspaper articles and news programs as *unhousable*. Sorella was a newer way to house the women who were difficult to house anywhere else in the city. It was modern, expensive, green building, and it was designed for each person to have an apartment with a bathroom, and with staff available twenty-four hours a day.

When it first opened, I was sitting outside the building when I noticed a news crew taking pictures. I stood up and moved. I didn't want to be included in a picture. I understood the implications of finding myself a resident in Sorella. Because the news was covering Sorella's opening, men often stood by the front door waiting to talk to the women as they went inside. They stopped me to ask questions about the building. One man asked me, "Is this the new prostitutes' building?" Less unkind men asked me, "Is this the women's homeless shelter?"

Sorella opened in June. In July, a press conference with a ribbon cutting was held on the second floor. The Vancouver mayor, Gregor Robertson, and Janice Abbott, the CEO of Atira, a non-profit society, were at Sorella's opening ceremony. Atira's mission statement says that it is committed to ending violence against women. Atira managed Sorella. It hired all the staff, and managed other women's housing projects in the DTES.

The building is on the corner of Abbott St and Pender St, at the entrance of Vancouver's Chinatown neighborhood, half a block from the Dr. Sun Yat Sen gardens, and two blocks away from Gastown. If I longed to live in an area surrounded by high-priced real estate, then this was it. It is only two blocks from East Hastings street but in the decade prior to 2011, the area's value exploded until it became a coveted location. Sorella was surrounded by expensive rentals and condos, and affluent people lived in the area. The provincial government worked with the federal government and obtained the land Sorella was built on, and they both contributed millions of dollars for the building. Sorella was intended as a haven for women, and it was staffed with women.

The building might have acquired its extensive funding and its designation because of the attention given to the missing and murdered women from the DTES, as well as the negative attention given to the disastrous police investigation to find the person responsible. The missing and murdered women, all one-time residents from the Downtown Eastside, remained a painful memory for the people connected to their lives. Perhaps Sorella was offered as an olive branch, or an outstretched hand, for the living women who experienced brutality from predators.

Sorella was designed as a high-security building. Dome cameras were mounted on the ceilings throughout the building. The cameras recorded in every direction in the

hallways, in the lobby and the community rooms. The staff watched the cameras on the computer in their office. Every door in the building was affixed with automatic locks. All the fire exit doors and stairway doors were connected to alarms that howled if a door was surreptitiously propped open. Cameras were inside the elevators and the residents could only use their fob to take an elevator to their own floor. A person who came into the building with a tenant, but left the tenant's apartment, couldn't access the locked stairwells or the locked elevators to go to a different floor, and they remained in view of the cameras if they wandered around in the hallway. It was difficult for the tenants to visit their friends who lived in the building on another floor.

The tenants could access the staff, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and the staff could enter their private room at any time, both when unwarranted, and when desperately needed.

The women in Sorella lived as if an omnipresent threat existed. If there were threats, it was because they were women, and because they were poor women. When they were harmed in the past no one came rushing to their aid. Justice was neither offered, nor afforded even when it was sought out.

Behind Sorella's heavy entrance doors was a lobby where donated couches seemed out of place in the expensive neighborhood. But Sorella was a social housing building and although it was brand new in 2011, it was institutional. The walls were painted a color that was hard to discern. They looked beige or pale green or a washed out grey. It was hard to tell under the fluorescent lights that kept the building perpetually glowing in artificial daylight. The office in the lobby housed the daytime staff, and the nighttime staff, but the manager's office was out of sight and getting an appointment with her was more difficult.

The day I moved into the building my belongings were taken down to the basement and fumigated. The *bugroom* was a concrete room. Inside the room an industrial heater raised the temperature high enough to kill any bugs within thirty minutes. If a *bugroom* implied we carried bugs in our possessions, it was worth it to live without cockroaches or bed bugs. Once a month, a pest control company came to the building and checked each person's room. They searched the mattress seams for signs of bed bugs. If the pest control company saw bed bugs, the staff asked the tenant to pack up their belongings into garbage bags until it was arranged for their room to be fumigated.

Sorella had twelve two-bedroom apartments rented exclusively to mothers and their children, in the care of the Ministry of Children and Families. Living in Sorella allowed the mothers to live in a community with staff available to help. But they couldn't live in Sorella permanently. When they were stable, they needed to find another place to live. The other tenants could live in Sorella indefinitely.

The women in Sorella referred to their apartment as a *room*, because of the small size. Each person's room was furnished with a bed, a table and two chairs, and a dresser. All the furniture was provided by the building, and it was bland and non-descript, possibly ordered from the same catalogue as hospital furniture or prison furniture.

The apartments were small, but not terrible. The individual suites included a kitchenette with a stove, a fridge and cupboards. The floor was mahogany brown linoleum and it resembled dark laminate flooring. Underneath the dark linoleum was concrete. Anything made of glass and dropped on the floor would shatter into a thousand pieces.

In the suites facing the street, large floor-to-ceiling windows allowed in the sunshine. The expansive windows were beautiful, the best feature in the room. They natural light gave the rooms an airy quality, with a view of the neighborhood below. A drawback was a safety feature that allowed only two small windows, along the bottom of the larger windows, to open outward about two inches. Without the windows opening farther, it was scorching hot inside in the summertime. The heat felt merciless because it was inescapable.

The rooms on the back of the building also had large windows. They faced the alleyway but because the apartments were built on the third floor or higher, they viewed the second-floor rooftop garden. The garden on the extended back of the building was decorated with benches, shrubs and trees, a vegetable garden, and a playset for the children. The extension inside held a free laundry room, a community kitchen, used for cooking classes, and a computer room and televisions. The staff had WIFI in their offices, and it was available in the computer room but the residents I knew, myself included, did not have the basic skills to use the computers. When I was doing my laundry, I noticed a solitary person at a computer, but it never occurred to me to use it. The computer and TV room was usually empty.

In the lobby of Sorella, a large bulletin board was on the wall, next to the office. A tenant posted a note if she wanted to sell something, like a used TV. Researchers from the university posted offers of a stipend if tenants participated in studies. The staff posted events they planned for the building. The staff wanted to hold exercise classes on the second floor. To interest the women, they posted an invitation on the bulletin board. When I first saw the sign, the classes were offered in the daytime. The next time I noticed the sign it was changed from daytime classes to 3AM classes. I never went, but if I

did go, I would have gone to the 3AM classes.

After 2016, the staff began to post dates and times of memorial services held on the second floor in the community room. The women who lived in Sorella were overdosing and dying from fentanyl.

The key each person was given in 2011 was a card key, like the keys used in hotels. They were easily reprogrammed if they were lost or when a tenant moved. The staff's master card key opened every door on one floor. If a tenant wasn't seen for three days by the staff, the staff entered the person's room to do a safety check. It was to assure the tenant's safety, but sometimes during a shift change the daytime staff didn't mark down who they saw. Some days I was up and down on the elevator, and in and out of the lobby, ten times a day. The office windows were large and faced the lobby where the women sat on the couches to talk. I made a point of talking to the staff when I saw them. Still there were times I was sleeping, and I woke up because someone came into my room. I felt panicked. It was dark and I didn't know who it was. I saw the staff during the day, so I didn't think it was them. But it was them.

Each room in Sorella had an intercom installed in the ceiling. The intercoms were connected to the office. When I moved into Sorella, I didn't realize an intercom was in my room. The first time the staff used the intercom to talk to me, I was alone in my room when I heard a voice speaking. I stopped what I was doing and stayed perfectly still. I wasn't sure if the person speaking saw me, too. When other people in the building learned there were speakers on their ceilings connected to the office, some of the women steadfastly believed the staff used the intercom to listen to them. It sounds ridiculous except the intercoms periodically turned on. A clicking sound was followed by loud, fuzzy static. I thought a button was pushed accidentally, but for people who

already felt like their privacy wasn't regarded, it added to the suspicions.

Nobody was happy if another tenant set off the fire alarm. It meant the entire building was evacuated onto the street, often in the middle of the night. Everybody waited for the firefighters to decide if it was safe to go back inside. Smoking cigarettes didn't set off the fire alarms, but in a building where most tenants were on medication, or forgetful, or unfamiliar with cooking, the fire alarms were set off a lot.

I lived in an Atira residence, years before, on Cordova Street in the DTES. It was a house converted into women's housing. The girl who lived in the room across the hall from my room fell asleep with a candle burning. She burned down the whole house, so I understood why there were fire extinguishers attached to the wall, on every floor, and why the staff in Sorella were cautious about fires.

One freezing predawn morning, the women were evacuated from the building. They grumbled but soon everyone was standing outside, some women wearing their pajamas. A smaller group of women huddled outside, against the front wall. I could hear them complaining about the idiot who set her room on fire. I didn't say anything, but I nodded in agreement. I was just happy because I wasn't an idiot.

The fire department took a long time in the building and the women were impatient. One of the night staff was outside talking to a fireman. Afterwards she walked over to me and told me the fire was in my room. She said everyone needed to wait outside until the smoke cleared. I turned my head slightly and I saw the women glaring at me. I tried to tell Carol, one of the night staff, that the fire wasn't in my room. She disagreed. She said, "I know it was in your room because the location of the

fire alarm shows on the computer. Anyways your room was full of smoke. You didn't notice the smoke?"

I just heard the fire alarm. But I was sleeping. I woke up but I didn't see a fire burning in my room. Now we were all standing outside, and I was more concerned that the other girls were mad at me. I argued, "Carol, it wasn't in my room!"

But I didn't believe that. I only hoped everyone waiting around outside heard me arguing. I followed Carol up to my room on the fourth floor.

In my room she pointed at the oven. It was covered in foam because the firemen sprayed it with fire repellent. She said, "You filled up the drawer under the oven with papers and books and notebooks. And you left the oven on for so long the paper ignited, and it started a fire."

I remembered turning on the oven when I came in, earlier that night. I was freezing and my room seemed cold. I tried to warm my room up. I turned the oven up too high then I fell asleep. I told Carol I forgot the oven was on. She asked, "But why did you put paper in the bottom of the oven?"

I told her, "Because I was just storing my notebooks and stuff in there. I never thought it would catch on fire."

The first three years I lived in the building visitors weren't allowed to come inside after 10 PM, or to stay overnight. No exceptions were made for holidays like Christmas. The women in Sorella complained bitterly because guests weren't allowed after ten and they looked for ways to circumvent the rules.

After living in Sorella for a short time, I noticed which staff were vigilant or easy going. It was obvious they watched the cameras in the office on the computer. If there was an *incident*, like a big argument between four

women, the staff didn't always know about it until the next day, so I knew they reviewed the camera footage. I stood behind them in the office to see how much of the building they watched on the computer screen. It looked like the cameras flipped back and forth to different floors and at different angles. The computer could be set to a split screen to show six pictures of different floors or it could be set to watch one floor all night. The women in Sorella needed each other's help to occupy the staff if they wanted to bring a guest upstairs after 10PM. One tenant phoned the staff to come up to their floor. They claimed to be locked out of their room and needed the staff upstairs while another tenant tried to get past the office with their guest and onto the elevator. If the staff saw them before the elevator started moving, then the staff locked the elevator and made the guest leave.

Certain staff let the rules be broken. Whether it was carelessness or an oversight, or they wanted to give the women a break, it didn't matter. The tenants liked those staff the most.

When a new manager started, the 'no overnight guests' rule was eased to allow two overnight visits per week. Aside from the two overnight visits, a tenant was only allowed one guest at a time and the guest needed to leave by 11 PM, and 1 AM on the weekends. If a tenant ignored the rule and let the guest stay past 11pm, the staff showed up at their door and held the door open until the guest left. In time, the staff started to write up the tenants instead. A guest who stayed past eleven was barred from returning. If the tenant received two more warnings, then she lost her guest privileges altogether. The rules changed as often as the staff, and new staff had their own interpretation of the rules. But the reality of the rules remained the same. Other people made the decisions instead of allowing us, the tenants, to make our own decisions.

The logic behind the strict rules was to protect the

women from further exploitation and abuse, but the rules restricted friendships and countered the belief that if a person has paid her rent, then she could have friends and family visit her - even if she was a tenant from the Downtown Eastside.

Because of the limited guests, the women began to befriend each other and depend on each other. Marissa was one of my best friends in Sorella. She lived at one end of the fourth floor, and I lived at the other end. I knew her for years, but we became better friends because we lived on the same floor. We both lived in the DTES as teenagers. Marissa loved animals and she had a cat and a rabbit in her room, so our hallway smelled like the SPCA. She sold dope in the building, but she was generous. Even though Marissa had a quick temper, she cried easily. She helped the women who had nothing. She gave them food if they were hungry, and when they were sick, they always showed up on her doorstep. But she got tired of girls knocking on her door to ask her if they could put dope on their bill. After too many girls came to her door in one day, all looking for favors, she screamed, "Get away from my door, don't come back!"

As they were slinking away, she called them back and handed them the dope they asked her for but with instructions to not ask her again. They wouldn't, until they paid some money on their debt. Then they started adding to their bill again. The women brought her their clothes to trade for dope, so she had piles of clothes, far too many to wear, in her tiny apartment.

Just before I moved out in 2018, Marissa was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her doctor said it was unlikely she would survive because of her other health problems. I went to her room to talk to her after someone came to my room and told me. Marissa wasn't crying. She didn't seem too upset. I felt like I had nothing to offer her so I told her I would pray for her. She believed the doctor was wrong.

I visited her in 2020, two and a half years after her diagnosis and she seemed okay. She had lost her hair, but it was growing back. I was happy because she looked healthy. But she said she carried the breast cancer gene and her doctor told her the cancer was returning. The doctors wanted her to have a mastectomy. She didn't want to do it. Her boyfriend, standing behind her said, you should do it, Marissa. Marissa's eyes turned dark when she spun around to face him. She said, "You don't understand because you're not a girl."

Sorella is one of the few buildings where marginalized women live and males don't control their lives. In the hotels, the hotel owners enforced the rules without discretion. If I was upstairs sleeping in a friend's room and my guest fee wasn't paid, the owner woke me up, grabbed my hair and dragged me down the hallway, onto the elevator, and out the front door. The man who worked at the front desk might tell the owner a girl refused to pay her guest fee because he pocketed for himself. The drug dealer who 'ran' the hotel assessed the value of the females who lived in the building, or who came inside to buy dope, and categorized them. The women he planned to have sex with he liked the best. He gave them free dope even when they weren't having sex with him. The other female tenants and customers he let borrow dope once, but if they didn't pay him the money back, they couldn't ask him again. A dealer I knew for years told me the first time a girl asked him to borrow dope he always said yes. When she started out with a debt, she was indebted to him.

The special treatment some girls received caused tension and competition because the females were all in the same position: addicted, and in need of favour from the men who controlled their opportunities and the buildings where they lived. Each female wanted a little bit of extra help to make their lives more bearable. Ironically, the females sustained the drug trade, at least

where I lived. The male customers bought drugs once or twice a day, but the women worked and bought drugs all night, and all day, without rest. The drugs sustained them when they felt hopeless.

A new girl moved into the 'mother's suite' in Sorella with her little boy and next to Marissa's room. She wasn't from the DTES and she didn't appear to be a drug user. She was an Indian girl and she looked clean and healthy. She had perfect teeth. I didn't see scars on her hands or her arms. The first time we spoke, we were going up to the fourth floor in the elevator.

She asked me, "Will drug dealers give me drugs if I don't have money?"

I was surprised. I looked at her more carefully. I asked her, "Do you do drugs?"

She didn't answer me. She insisted again that she wanted to find drugs except she didn't have any money. I was doubtful she did drugs because if she did, she wouldn't need to ask me how to get them. If she did drugs, she'd figure it out herself.

I told her, "If you're talking about the drug dealers on Hastings Street, no, they don't give anyone drugs because they don't even own the drugs they sell."

The girl listened.

"If you're talking about drug dealers who sell inside, if you ask them for dope but you have no money they freak out and scream at you, tell you to leave. Anyways, you have your little boy."

She ignored my comment about her little boy. She was persistent. She wanted to know if there was anything she could do to get drugs without money. I told her, no. No, there's no way for you to get drugs.

Except after that I couldn't stop thinking about her or wondering what she was thinking about. Or why she wanted to find drugs.

In 1999, two policemen, Al Arsenault and Toby Hinton, started filming addicts they knew in the DTES. At that time, producers from the National Film Board of Canada were filming in the DTES and they met the policemen. Eventually, the producers collaborated with the policemen to make the documentary *Through A Blue Lens*. The movie followed three women and one man in their day-to-day life, addicted, in the DTES. One of the women, Nicola, lived in Sorella and she was my next-door neighbor. In the movie, Nicola was a kind, funny but mentally unstable woman, and a longtime drug addict. When she was living beside me, she was still kind and funny, but her mental health was much worse than it had been. She stayed in her room for long periods of time. Occasionally I spoke to her, but when I saw her room, it was a disaster. The room was in the worst condition I had ever seen. She was sleeping without bedding, it was filthy, and she had no food. She told me that every so often her sister's ex-husband came by to bring her food. Nicola, at the time she lived in Sorella, may have been in her sixties, although I didn't know her age. I thought her situation was dire. I wondered about all the locks and cameras and security measures, all the money used to build Sorella, yet no one was there to help Nicola. How could a human being be allowed to live in such extreme conditions in a building that cost millions of dollars, a green building, a building the city seemed so proud of? Eventually Nicola was *removed* from the building when she turned on the faucets in her suite and flooded her room and part of the fourth floor.

On Sorrella's website, it said one-third of the units were intended for people with mental health problems or an addiction, or both. I thought the number of women who lived in Sorella with those problems was ninety five percent or more. When someone in the DTES was an

addict, it was their most obvious problem, but not their only problem.

Sheena lived on the fourth floor, two doors down from me. She was an impressive artist. She found materials like mirrors and glass, framed posters of Marilyn Monroe, or discarded pictures that she cut up and repurposed for her own artwork. She collected hanging lights and crystals from chandeliers she found in the laneways in the West End. Her room was spotless. When my door was propped open, I saw her cleaning and scrubbing. She somehow attached a doorbell to her door. She posted new signs every day, instructions for the women who came to her door. Her instructions were specific. Knock Twice Only or Ring the Bell or I'm not Answering. Sometimes she posted Take Off Shoes. She was obsessed with the thought of someone wearing shoes into her room. But when I did walk into her room, it was like walking into an art gallery. At nighttime, her art lit up and it was displayed against a backdrop of floor to ceiling windows with the city lights glowing through.

Sheena was talented. We laughed and joked. Then, like an overcast sky, she changed. She questioned me. She asked, why did I clear my throat? If I answered, because my throat's dry, she insisted I tell her why I *really* cleared my throat. Her questions were circular. We were friends, but I was always slightly hesitant around her.

Tasha was my friend for years in the DTES. I met her when I was twenty-one. Her body including her face was burned when she was a little kid. Tasha, her brother, and her mother were all asleep in their house when her stepfather set the house on fire. He tried to kill them all, but he didn't succeed. But she was scarred for life because of the fire. I asked if it bothered her to have burns on her face and her body. She said, no, I don't think about it. I don't remember what I looked like before I was burned. I never told her that I didn't like my

own appearance. Yet she knew, she felt it because she often told me, don't worry, you look pretty.

Tasha lived above me, so she helped me get up to her floor when I wanted to visit someone there. I helped her get to the fourth floor when she wanted to see Marissa. Sheena hated her. If I heard Sheena screaming at someone in the hallway and went out there to see who it was often it was Tasha, leaving Marissa's room. I didn't understand why Sheena hated her. Maybe her reasons were as tangled up as her thoughts.

On the way to the elevators, I passed by Marissa's room. Next to her room was the apartment where the Indian girl lived with her little boy. I hadn't seen her much since the day in the elevator when she asked me how to get drugs. Waiting at the elevator I noticed a piece of paper taped to her door. I walked closer to read it. The note said, *I don't want my boy anymore so take him away.* I reread the note. I knocked on her door. When she came to the door, she seemed calm. I expected her to act differently. She wasn't flustered or crying so I felt angry. I asked her, "Why did you write this on your door? If the staff saw this and called somebody they could take your boy away".

She didn't flinch. She told me she didn't care. I wanted to shake her but I instead I ripped her note into little pieces and dropped it at her feet.

There was something about the girl that caused me to feel uneasy. I felt like she was teetering on a cliff or standing near the edge of a building and a strong wind was waiting to sweep her over the edge.

She lived so close to Marissa's room so I asked Marissa if she saw her much. She said she did. The girl noticed Marissa sold dope and she walked into her room when Marissa's door was propped open, to see if she could get some. I asked Marissa, "Does she buy dope?"

She said, "No, she just asks me to give it to her. I always tell her I don't have any".

Near the end of 2015, and the beginning of 2016, the ambulance sirens were playing their soundtrack outside my window. I fell asleep to the music of the sirens, and I woke up to the same music. It was as if there was only one constant siren. I left my room one day and I passed by Sheena lighting a candle in front of my neighbor's door. Tracy moved in after Nicola left. I hardly saw her, and now she was gone because she overdosed on fentanyl. After Sheena lit a candle for Tracy, the other women on the fourth floor all brought candles. When someone died the staff wrote about them and posted it in the lobby.

A Native woman lived across from Marissa's room but she never became friends with anyone on the fourth floor, and she didn't have any friends in the building. For a time, a man came to visit her, and she screamed so loudly at him it woke me up, all the way down at the other end of the hallway. She was combative so I avoided her. I waited to get on the elevator until after her because whoever she turned her attention towards she might bear the brunt of her screaming.

Except she started screaming inside of her room when she was alone. I was walking to the elevator one day when I noticed her door was torn off the hinges. Soon after, the woman was moved into Tracy's old room, next to my room, and we began to share a wall. Sheena lived on the other side of the woman's room, so now she, too, shared a wall with the woman.

It was August and the heat was bearing down like a weight. I felt like I couldn't escape it, and I couldn't get any fresh air into my room. I had two fans. My friend bought me an air conditioner, but it needed an open window to work, and our windows only opened far enough to stick one hand outside.

Sheena was in the hallway, arguing. I went out to see who she was arguing with and she grabbed my arm.

"They moved *her* beside us. Did you see what she did to her old room? She's crazy. Come with me, I'll show you."

"I heard you arguing out here with someone."

"Yeah, *her*, she called me a stupid bitch and then she wouldn't open her door." She kicked the woman's door.

Sheena turned so I followed her down the hall towards the woman's old room. At the old room, Sheena maneuvered the unusually heavy door, still half hanging from the hinges, so we could pass underneath it.

When we walked into the woman's room and I saw what surfaced from inside of the woman's mind, reflected onto physical objects, the whole world fell silent. The sirens outside stopped sounding, the laughter in the hallway ended in midair, Sheena's voice disappeared. The evidence of what was boiling up inside of the woman was displayed like a forensic report everywhere in her old room. The woman, alone in her room, pulled apart and ripped down and ripped up, everything nailed into place. The kitchen cupboards were torn from the walls, one by one. Then the cupboard doors were pulled off. Her room was destroyed. But the sheer strength it took was shocking. She reduced it all to garbage. I didn't notice her personal belongings destroyed because I saw much more than broken dishes or destroyed clothes. It seemed impossible for one human to do, and more so because she used her hands. There were no tools strewn around. She wasn't a drug user. This wasn't superhuman strength because of using drugs.

"See what she did. And the staff moved her into a room between our rooms."

Sheena's complaining was drowned out by my thoughts. I considered the door hanging off the hinges. When I was offered a room in Sorella, the first thing I did was check the door. My door was kicked in the DTES and twice while I was sleeping. I wanted to make sure it was a strong door. The manager who showed me the room, watched when I shut the door to check how heavy it was. She said, no one will break into your room. She was right. Every time I left my room, I struggled to pull open the heavy metal door. Yet, this woman somehow pulled her door off the thick metal hinges.

After the woman lived in the room beside my room for a few days, she started screaming again. She screamed incessantly. She screamed for hours, as loud as someone has ever screamed. She was alone, she wasn't screaming at somebody in her room. She was screaming, *I'm going to kill you, or you motherfucker*. It never ended. If I fell asleep listening to her scream but woke up and I didn't hear it, I thought *it's over*. Except it wasn't over. She started screaming again. Sheena wouldn't put up with the woman screaming, night and day. She banged on the wall with a pan, she swore at the woman, she threatened her, but nothing stopped the woman from screaming. At first, I felt sad for the woman. But the constant screaming made it was harder to be nice. I couldn't think over the noise she made.

After a week of her screaming, I called the staff. I said they needed to do something. She should go to the hospital. Everyone on our floor was stressed and Sheena wanted to force the woman to shut up. I told the staff it wasn't a good idea for Sheena to be so angry.

Sheena went down to the lobby filled with rage. She screamed too, and she ordered the staff to stop the woman from screaming. The staff said there wasn't anything they could do about it.

It was going on two weeks and the woman was still screaming. I was amazed that anyone could scream for so long. I've screamed for a couple of minutes and lost my voice. Then her screaming changed. Instead of, *Fuck you, I'm going to kill you*, she started screaming, *Help me*. It was so pitiful and sad.

I was done with the staff. I could not believe how indifferent they were to someone who was suffering. Sheena was more enraged than I'd ever seen her. She started a petition to have the woman removed from the building. She knocked on my door early one morning to tell me that I was the only person on the fourth floor who hadn't signed it. I just didn't believe it would matter. The staff knew about the woman and they knew how much the noise was upsetting everyone on the fourth floor. I couldn't imagine what the poor woman was experiencing. But they wouldn't do anything to help her or us. It was shades of Nicola, all over again.

In the staff office a number for the mental health car was posted. The staff phoned to ask for the car to come when someone needed urgent mental health care. The car came with a policeman, or woman and a mental health nurse. Because the woman was screaming *Help me*, I thought it was enough to call the car to the building. I phoned the office and begged them to call it. It might calm everyone else down and the people in the mental health car would know how to get the incessant screaming to stop. The staff I asked said, *No we can't call anybody*. I was in disbelief. What better reason was there to call the mental health car? Why did they have its number? I told the staff they made me sick, and I thought they were disgusting. The staff said, "Why don't you call someone?"

"Me? Who will the hell listen to me? You won't listen to me, why would somebody else? She's screaming 'Help me!' Don't you care? You're the staff. If you don't care then you better go. Drop the front door keys on the filing

cabinet on your way out. Leave them beside the needles and the crack pipes, with the rest of the harm reduction supplies, at least those things are helping people. You're completely useless."

On the phone, I only had a minute to tell the staff off or they hung up on me. I called the woman back. She answered, "Sorella", in a happy voice.

I asked her, "Are you going to sit in your locked office all night watching the Bachelor? Or are you going to do what they paid you to do?"

She said, "I'm going to hang up now".

"That's what I thought you were going to do, nothing at all".

Instead of hanging up, she said, "Why don't you call the police?"

I never wanted to call the police. But the woman on the phone, in the office, was a huge, unmovable boulder and I couldn't get her to budge no matter how much I tried pushing her. I was furious she asked me to call the police when it was her job.

I called 911 and told the dispatcher a woman was screaming, *Help me*, in my building. They dispatched a police car, and two policemen came to my door. I explained to them about my neighbor screaming, how she was screaming for help. They knocked on her door and I heard them talking to her. I was surprised she opened her door. I felt like she must have been so worn out from screaming for such a long time. She wasn't taken anywhere that night, but she was gone shortly after. *Removed* from the building, like Nicola was removed. She should have never suffered for so long. There were ways to help her, except the staff refused.

The woman was screaming in August and I moved out of Sorella in January.

I've been back to Sorella to visit the people I care about who still live there. The first time I returned, I went to see Tasha. I was wondering about the Indian girl and her little boy.

Tasha said, "Oh, her little boy was taken away."

I was silent.

"After that, she was in someone's room on the sixth floor but the woman whose room she was in, she fell asleep. While she slept the girl stole all her dope. She took her dope, and she went downstairs to her own room and she did it all".

My heart fluttered for a second. I looked up from the lines and grooves on Tasha's linoleum floor.

"And it was way too much for her to do. She died."

I remembered ripping her note up into little pieces and I wanted so much to go back but instead of being angry, I wanted to hug her. I should have hugged her and told her I know what it feels like to be alone. I should have said she was a good Mom, even if she wasn't able to care for her little boy. Maybe it was too hard to look after her little boy by herself.

The women living in Sorella accepted things most people would never tolerate. Still, they were grateful for the help they received. Every person who lived in Sorella was thankful that they were important enough to be given a place to live.

I was aware of how we were perceived. When picketers held protests to stop construction on similar buildings in neighborhoods other than in the DTES, I understood we

weren't welcomed by all people. Somehow a shift took place; the people who were victims of violence became the people others feared.

The extreme rules in Sorella highlight how the women changed every aspect of their lives when they accepted housing in a social housing building. Where else do tenants have so few rights? Most free adults have never lived with so much control asserted over their lives. The reason it happened in Sorella was because the women agreed to live with the restrictions because they had no other options.

When women were referred to as *unhousable*, they were more grateful to be offered social housing. Describing people as *unhousable* seems like an explanation for allowing them to live in unsafe, substandard housing for years or the reason they were asked to follow rules no other group of tenants would agree to. The women complained far less than most people would.

Nonetheless, I felt grateful to live in a brand new, clean women's building. I learned to accept women as friends because we depended on each other. We were stronger together than we were alone. But the good experiences at Sorella haven't erased the memories of the sad experiences or the tragic deaths of the women who expected little, and deserved so much better.

PJSA PUBLICATIONS CHAIR UPDATE

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Summer 2021

I first want to publicly thank the PJSA folks (you know who you are—but I don't want to spoil it for the rest) who contributed to the forthcoming book *Good-bye Don? Explaining and Resisting Trumpism Post-2020* that I am editing along with Dr. Laura Finley. The submissions were excellent and sent promptly. I can't thank you enough.

At the time of this writing, you still have an opportunity to submit your abstract (Aug. 31 is the deadline) to be included in the seventh issue of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis (JTTP)*, one of PJSA's partner journals. The theme is Health, Equity, and Peacebuilding. More details can be found here: <https://jtpp.uk/call-for-papers/>

If you are presenting at PJSA's 2021 annual conference in Wisconsin, JTTP's editor, Jeremy Rinker, would like you to submit your paper for publication in the journal. He will also be present at the conference to address any questions or concerns about the journal.

This is a continuation of our efforts to serve members better through soliciting direct feedback, and I greatly appreciate those who filled out the PJSA Publications Feedback Survey. (Special thanks to Lavanya for following up with respondents.)

For its part, the *Journal of Resistance Studies (JRS)* is now an established interdisciplinary, international, and

peer-reviewed journal with a focus on critical reflections and research on unarmed resistance against different forms of domination and violence. During the last year the *Journal of Resistance Studies* has been offered for free for all members.

Since the spring a working group of folks from PJSA, IPRA, EuPRA, and JRS have sought to make JRS a sustainable repository of new and critical perspectives within peace studies. A key part of sustainability is more institutional subscriptions, so please ask your university library to subscribe. The editors are also looking for more contributions of articles, reviews, and debates as well as editorial board members and interns. If you want to get involved, please contact the deputy editor: jorgen@resistance-journal.org.

JRS volume 7, number 1 (2021) just came out last month, featuring articles about resistance to patriarchy by rural Afghan women and Palestinian resistance through hunger strikes. More details can be found here: <https://resistance-journal.org/>

The entire issue is available by clicking "Downloads" at the top then "My Account" then "PJSA, IPRA, and EuPRA Members" on the bottom left, and then "PJSA members" in the middle of the page. Please contact the editor (stellan.vinthagen@gmail.com) if you are having trouble accessing the journal.

Hope to see everyone in Wisconsin!
