



ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

April 2020 No.19

Lockdown

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

*All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.*

*So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.
Br Richard Hendrick, a Capuchin Franciscan living in Ireland, penned this poem about the
coronavirus pandemic.*

Message from Phil Glendenning, Director of Edmund Rice Centre for Justice & Community Education

The challenge and our mission

In the midst of the chaos and confusion that has accompanied the creeping, tightening, increasing, inevitable lockdown that has typified the past few weeks, it would have been easy to miss that last week, March 24, marked 40 Years since the assassination of Oscar Romero. The 2018 canonisation of the murdered archbishop of El Salvador, focused the world's attention on one of the Cold War's most notorious crimes, and on one of its most remarkable victims. He was assassinated while saying Mass 40 years ago, on 24 March 1980. The challenge for people of faith and people of good will generally, is to keep his memory alive.

St Oscar Romero has a simple message, especially for church leaders (and other leaders for that

matter): “Be bold, speak the truth, stand up for the poor and stand up for justice. And without counting the cost. Those things he did. It is a pattern of leadership that contrasts with the more familiar exercise of episcopal authority: careful, moderate, cautious, risk-averse, afraid of giving offence especially to the rich and powerful, and patronising the poor without truly identifying with them” (*from Editorial The Tablet March 18, 2020*)

So while the tendency at the moment is, completely understandably, to focus inwards on protecting what is ours, and those closest to us, we cannot limit ourselves to that.

Our mission takes us in another direction – outwards.

When Romero’s life was challenged publicly, when his life was at risk, he did not hold a seminar on internal structures, organise for his Archdiocesan staff to be compliant with the Government (that was threatening his life), instead he reached out to those who were the victims of oppression, gave voice to their demand to live on this planet like human beings, stood with and for them, and was martyred for it.

Now – obviously and thank God - none of us are facing threats as serious as Romero. Nevertheless this is could be a time to remake our priorities, as the above poem calls us to, rather than head into the mire of tightening and straightening, and the temptation of the certainty of ignorance, that can easily happen as things close down. We cannot afford to do that. We must not do that.

Put simply, our partners are at the cutting edge of this virus pandemic, and right in its line of fire. Oxfam have adopted the theme ‘*Pandemics know no borders, neither should compassion*’, which resonates with our work as well. Put simply, the people we work with, partner with and advocate with and for - First Nations peoples, refugees and people seeking asylum, and the vulnerable peoples of the Pacific, are especially at risk now.

In terms of our work, there is plenty that needs to be done throughout this time:

- those in detention are sitting ducks if the virus gets into their centres – they need to be brought into the community immediately;
- people on bridging visas cannot leave the country and therefore need access to the social security safety net and Medicare;
- those on temporary protection visas need a pathway to permanent protection and family reunion rights;
- other visa holders urgently require flexibility in their arrangements;
- those in PNG must be brought to Australia immediately as PNG does not have the capacity to protect their own citizens as well as those who are Australia’s responsibility.
- First Nations peoples have been correctly highlighted by the Government as at severe risk and the virus poses a real threat particularly to isolated communities and rural townships right across the country – especially in the Kimberley and the NT.
- Tuvalu (population 11,000) and Kiribati (pop. 105,000) would simply be decimated if the virus made it to their shores. They are in lockdown but they are very scared.

- All this on top of poverty and climate change. Kiribati does not have even one coronavirus test kit.

At the same time finding funding for NGO's and not-for-profits was already going to be very hard in the wake of the summer of fires, but now it will definitely be a very tough year, but even tougher for the people we serve, partner with and advocate for.

All of this on top of a summer of fires and floods and the realities of climate change. 2020, the year we won't forget.

Dear All,

Welcome to the 19th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

REMEMBER WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

When we thought the start of 2020 could not get any worse look what the world and Australia has been faced with - a real challenge to everybody to learn a new way of living and never forgetting that we are all in this together and must act with care, compassion and in the interests of our whole community.

May I live this day compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, generous in love. John O'Donohue

In this time of great upheaval & change Justice Updates will be coming to you every fortnight - please send us anything you would like included. Your suggestions, comments both positive and negative or indeed any information you think would be good to include, it is all much appreciated.

Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

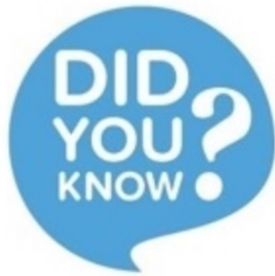
Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace

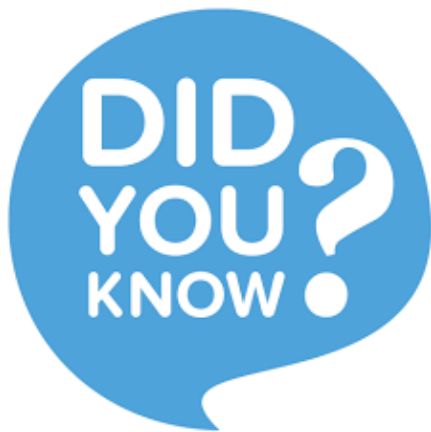
Marita

Communications Project Officer,

Marita McInerney



On Wednesday 1st April 2020, the Australian government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2431 days.



**Australian Government
Department of Health Official
Information 31st March 2020**

AUSTRALIAN CASES

- Of 4359 confirmed cases in Australia, 18 have died from COVID-19. More than 230,000 tests have been conducted across Australia.
- ACT - 78
- New South Wales - 2,032
- Northern Territory - 14
- Queensland - 689
- South Australia - 305
- Tasmania - 65
- Victoria - 821
- Western Australia - 355

ACROSS THE WORLD FIGURES

- 766,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19
- More than 36,800 deaths

WHERE TO OBTAIN UP TO DATE FACTS

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources#find-the-facts>

The Virus Is Our Teacher

Robert C. Koehler **Common Wonders** March 25, 2020

Last Sunday at 11 a.m. I went for a walk. Even if it's nothing special, a walk isn't a normal thing to do these days. But this brief walk — around the block, consuming maybe ten minutes of my time — had a transcendent dimension to it that continues to awe me, and I'm going to do it again.

It was a prayer walk: my response to Marianne Williamson's call for two minutes of [global prayer](#) on that day, set for 4 p.m. Greenwich Mean Time and meant to include the whole world.

When I heard about it, I decided: Why not? 'It is a global prayer, held in the silence of our own hearts . . .' And stepping outside seemed appropriate. There was a bitterness to the weather, but I put my hand against my heart and started walking and I found myself actually loving the cold wind as it

scraped my face. This moment was brand new, unlike any other. I continued to hold my hand on my heart as I walked and breathed. I let loose, cautiously at first, a sense of hope and caring as I stared in wonder at this utterly familiar, yet unfamiliar, piece of Planet Earth I was traversing. The hope and caring swelled.

And then I was back at my house.

That's it. Nothing more came of it. The news didn't change much. Or did it? The next day U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called on the countries of the world to declare a [ceasefire](#): 'The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war,' he said. 'That is why today, I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.'

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Here, for instance, are the last lines of a poem (in translation) my friend Jan Slakov recently sent me, by Italian poet [Mariangela Gualtieri](#), called 'March the Ninth Twenty Twenty':

***... To that grasp of a palm
in another person's palm
to that simple act that we are now forbidden —
we will return with expanded awareness.
We'll be here, more attentive, I think. Our hand
will be more delicate in the doing of life.
Now that we know how sad it is
to stand one meter apart.***

Even now, palms can grasp palms, at least in spirit, across the borders that we can see, at last, are not real.

Full article:

<http://commonwonders.com/the-virus-is-our-teacher/>



After winning the Windham Campbell, Ali Cobby Eckermann began to see writing as an actual career. Photograph: Annette Willis

Ali Cobby Eckermann on winning the world's richest writing prize: 'It's taken time to adjust'

Stephanie Covery, The Guardian, 18th March 2020

Poet lived in a caravan when she heard she had won \$215,000. Ahead of this year's Windham Campbell, she reflects on what that recognition can bring

Ali Cobby Eckermann had \$47 in the bank and was living in a caravan when she found out, in March 2017, that she'd won the world's richest literary prize, the Windham Campbell.

The prize is a coup for any writer. Administered by Yale University, judged anonymously and not open to submissions (it comes as a shock to all who are selected, not least one who [found it in her junk mail](#)), it was worth some A\$215,000 a head when Eckermann learned she was one of eight winning writers.

This year's Windham Campbell prize is announced on Thursday. Its aim is to "call attention to literary achievement and provide writers with the opportunity to focus on their work independent of financial concerns."

For Eckermann, a member of Australia's Stolen Generations – who only started writing in earnest after finding both her long-lost mother and the son who was taken from her – it was transformative.

"I lived debt-free, but still, I was pretty poor," says the poet, 57. "You're so used to living that way. I thought I was living quite a comfortable, happy life, so it was

very, very shocking to receive the recognition of my work.”

From her first publication, the 2009 poetry collection *Little Bit Long Time*, to her 2012 verse novel *Ruby Moonlight* and the award-winning 2015 collection *Inside My Mother*, Eckermann has written through the trauma, violence, loss and healing of her own and other Indigenous people’s lives under colonisation.

Born in 1963, Eckermann was taken from her mother – a survivor of the British nuclear testing at Maralinga, South Australia – when she was a baby. She was adopted by a white family who lived on a farm in north-east South Australia.

She didn’t have a happy time at school, she says, and was expelled for standing up to racism before finishing. “That was schooling done for me.”

At the age of 17 she ran away. “I didn’t really run away from my adopted family; I ran away from the adopted society that I was living in,” she says. She made her way – instinctively, she says – to the desert (“I probably felt safer out there,” she says). She landed at the tiny town of Ooldea, little more than a railway siding on the edge of the Nullarbor Plain. There, she met the man who would become her son’s father.

Sometimes she caught wild camels; sometimes she picked up manual labour. For a while she worked as a roller on a road gang. She liked working outdoors, and the remoteness of the country meant she could keep her relationship with drugs and alcohol in check.

Read More: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/mar/18/ali-cobby-eckermann-on-winning-the-worlds-richest-writing-prize-its-taken-time-to-adjust?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMjAwMzE4&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS



Welfare recipients on cashless debit card will have \$750 stimulus payment

quarantined

Luke Henriques-Gomes, *The Guardian*, 18th March 2020

Welfare recipients on cashless debit card will have \$750 stimulus payment quarantined

Around 15,000 welfare recipients who have been compulsorily placed on the card won't be able to withdraw money as cash. [Welfare](#) recipients who are on the controversial cashless debit card will have their \$750 stimulus payment quarantined, as the government bucks a call from the nation's peak welfare lobby to give people "maximum flexibility" during the coronavirus outbreak.

As the government aims to prevent an economic downturn, about 6.5 million people – including those receiving payments including Newstart, the Age Pension, Family Tax Benefit and Disability Support Pension – will get \$750 dropped into their bank account from 31 March.

But the decision to quarantine the money for some people, confirmed to Guardian Australia on Tuesday evening, means around 15,000 welfare recipients who have been compulsorily placed on the card will not be able to withdraw the money as cash.

Cassandra Goldie, the chief executive of the Australian Council of Social Service, said it was "beyond belief" that the payments would be quarantined at a time of crisis. She said that cardholders had previously been "unable to access quarantined income because of a range of issues, from technical outages to their cashless debit card being declined".

"People need to have as much flexibility as possible right now, including over their money," she said.

In an effort to reduce social harm, the card quarantines a proportion of a person's welfare payments [onto a debit card that cannot be used to purchase alcohol or gambling products, or withdraw cash](#). It is currently in place in Ceduna (South Australia) and Hinkler (Queensland), and [the East Kimberley](#) and Goldfields areas of Western Australia.

[Critics say that the card causes stigma and also has practical harms](#), including that recipients have reported glitches that cause the card to decline, and [other issues such as cardholders simply not having enough cash for essential items](#).

The Greens senator Rachel Siewert said: "Not having control over the stimulus payment is yet another discrimination and stigma people on the Cashless Debit Card will face."

"People on low incomes are the best managers of money because every single dollar counts and is accounted for."

The government, which says it is trying to improve the card but stands by its aims, insists it is accepted at more than 900,000 businesses across the country. However, in some areas, people are barred from using their cards at shops and venues where alcohol and food are sold through the same terminal. A Department of Social Services spokeswoman said: "Cashless Debit Card participants will receive the \$750 Economic Support Payment as a lump sum payment onto their card, consistent with arrangements for lump sum payments such as Family Tax Benefit lump sum payments."

Read More: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/mar/18/welfare-recipients-on-cashless-debit-card-will-have-750-stimulus-payment-quarantined>

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Stateless and the inhumanity of detention

Andrew Hamilton, Eureka Street, Vol. 30 No.5

I've been watching Stateless, the ABC drama about Australia's immigration detention system, with some reluctance. Not because it is poor, but because it is so powerful.

Like the recent *Total Control*, which described the toxic intersection of Australian politics with the lives of Indigenous Australians, it describes the appalling reality behind the anodyne words of our policy towards the people it targets. The reluctance arose out of shame that in the last thirty years the treatment of people seeking protection in Australia had become more brutal and that my own efforts to help change public attitudes to refugees had been so unavailing.

Stateless invites us to see life in a remote detention centre. It shows the anger and despair of vulnerable people at being treated as criminals, at having to deal alone with the loss of families and of self-worth on their journey to Australia, at being unable to support families that they had left behind and at an opaque and arbitrary administrative system designed to frustrate every request.

The challenge faced by the creators of *Stateless* was to move past the apathy and denial which make people turn away in boredom or embarrassment when stories and images of non-Australian people in detention are presented. The dramatic device, based on an actual event, is to see the detention centre through the eyes of a generous and sensitive young father who is persuaded to work at the centre, and a blonde, blue-eyed white woman. We know through the backstory that she is a mentally ill Australian citizen dumped there by the same bureaucratic incuriosity that afflicts the people who seek protection. Her perspective and that of a reporter help the viewer break that barrier.

The series represents well the inherent tension between the Immigration Department's desire to implement a policy of deterrence based on the suffering of the people detained and the concern of the staff to run an orderly institution. This expresses itself in characteristically Australian simultaneous censoriousness at all violation of regulations and the mockery of hypocrisy. Both are evident in scenes when the officers inform people of their non-functional rights and their enforced duties. It also shapes the actions of a new department officer sent to keep the centre off the front pages.

It is difficult for any dramatic representation of the effects of long-term detention to show how casual, everyday inhumanity interacts with time. The damage done by detention is measured by the slow

leaching of brightness from the eye of people who have survived many threats to their lives and safety. Hope is eroded by forced inactivity, the daily humiliations of having to beg for human rights that are rewritten as privileges, and the frustration of lack of progress in their claim for protection. In time the eyes grow dull and hollow, a sign of the mental illness that may develop.

Read More: https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/stateless-and-the-inhumanity-of-detention?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Thursday%2019%20March%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Thursday%2019%20March%202020



Asylum seekers detained in immigration detention facilities have written to the prime minister, Scott Morrison, expressing fears of contracting coronavirus and asking to be released before an outbreak occurs. Photograph: Daniel Munoz/Reuters

'We are sitting ducks for Covid 19': asylum seekers write to PM after detainee tested in immigration detention

Saba Vasefi, The Guardian, 24th March 2020

Doctors are calling on people to be released from immigration detention, saying it could exacerbate the public health crisis

Asylum seekers detained in immigration detention facilities have written to the prime minister, Scott Morrison, expressing fears of contracting coronavirus and asking to be released before an outbreak occurs. Photograph: Daniel Munoz/Reuters

A detainee in Villawood detention centre has been tested for coronavirus, as asylum seekers and refugees in immigration detention centres across Australia say it is impossible for them to self-isolate and protect themselves from the virus.

"We are sitting ducks for Covid-19 and extremely exposed to becoming severely ill, with the possibility of death," detainees from across immigration detention centres have written in a letter to prime minister Scott Morrison, pleading to be released into the community on health grounds.

Asylum seekers and refugees said they were "anxious and scared" of a Covid-19 outbreak inside detention, saying they were being held "in a potential death trap in which we have no option or means to protect ourselves".

The [Australian government's own advisory](#) says "people in detention facilities" are considered most at risk of serious infection of Covid-19. Visits to immigration detention centres – including by family members – have been

cancelled.

Read More: [https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/mar/24/we-are-sitting-ducks-for-covid-19-asylum-seekers-write-to-pm-after-detainee-tested-in-immigration-detention?](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/mar/24/we-are-sitting-ducks-for-covid-19-asylum-seekers-write-to-pm-after-detainee-tested-in-immigration-detention?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMjAwMzI0&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS)
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MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIA MUST URGENTLY RAMP UP PACIFIC COVID-19 ASSISTANCE

As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Pacific region reaches 114, the Australian Government must urgently ramp up its assistance to Pacific nations to help them manage the health and economic impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic on their communities.

“We fully appreciate that the impacts of COVID-19 on Australians are very challenging and welcome the Morrison Government’s efforts to minimise the consequences of this pandemic for vulnerable Australians. At the same time, we must also remember that our direct neighbours - small Pacific nations - are potentially much more vulnerable than we are, from both a health and economic perspective. Without urgent and adequate assistance, the impacts of this pandemic in the Pacific could be devastating, said Corinne Fisher, Coordinator of the Pacific Calling Partnership (PCP), an initiative of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education.

On 3 March 2020, when there were still no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Pacific, Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Alex Hawke, announced a number of COVID-19 assistance measures for the Pacific. However, given the growing number of confirmed cases since this announcement, as well as the enormous scale of the pandemic, it is now urgent that Australia reviews and increases its assistance.

“Following his meeting with G20 leaders on 27 March, Australia PM Scott Morrison committed to reconfiguring Australia’s development assistance to ensure that critical health services continue to function, as well as manage the immediate economic impacts of the pandemic. However, Mr Morrison gave no further details or timeline for this review and did not specify whether additional funding would be allocated to this crisis, said Ms Fisher.

“We are confronted by issues that are beyond our capacity to handle and the COVID-19 pandemic is causing immense fear and panic in our community. Our best chance of coping with a possible outbreak is the support of our Tuakoi (neighbours) via the urgent provision of resources, such as testing kits, hand sanitiser and personal protective equipment for our health care workers.” said

Maina Talia, a Tuvaluan currently undertaking his PhD in Australia.

“My people in Kiribati are feeling defenceless, weak and unsafe and are in desperate need of help right now. The fear of what could happen if COVID-19 takes hold is very intense. We look towards Australia as a leader in the Pacific and this issue is no exception.” said Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang, PCP’s Pacific Outreach Officer and herself from Kiribati.

“We are now in an emergency. We call on the Morrison Government to urgently ramp up its assistance to the Pacific and clarify how and when it will do so. Time is of the essence for particular items, such as COVID-19 testing kits, because if the infection spreads in these vulnerable communities, the virus is expected to cause an even greater death toll than in more resilient communities such as our own, said Ms Fisher.

“We also call on the Morrison Government to ensure that any funding specific to Australia’s COVID-19 response in the Pacific is new funding and is not drawn from Australia’s current aid budget.” concluded Ms Fisher.

[Please click here to access our briefing on COVID-19 and the Pacific dated 31 March 2020](#)

A Message from Corinne Fisher

Coordinator Pacific Calling Partnership

It would be greatly appreciated if you have the time and feel so inclined, you could send a personal message supporting our call for urgent assistance to the Pacific to the following Parliamentarians or your local member:

Minister for International Development and the Pacific Alex Hawke:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Contact_Senator_or_Member?MPID=HWO

Australian PM Scott Morrison:

<https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm>

Pat Conroy MP (Labor Shadow Minister for the Pacific):

Pat.Conroy.MP@aph.gov.au

Local Member if unknown

https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members



Imagining life after COVID-19

Andrew Hamilton, Eureka Street, Vol . 30, No.6

To think of life after COVID-19 is daunting. The changes that it has brought to our daily lives have been vertiginous. Our awareness of its potential harm is still limited. We are only beginning to catch sight of the grim beast that slouches towards us threatening death and devastation in coming months.

Nevertheless, with so much rebuilding of society that will need to be done and so many opportunities that will present themselves for shaping a better society, we do need to think beyond the present.

Some possibilities are evident even in the disruption caused by our response to the threat. One of the most surprising features of that response has been flexibility, even in the face of visceral convictions. It is seen particularly in the abandonment of the economic ideology accepted by both major parties.

This equates the national good with economic growth. It centralises the freedom of competitive individuals in a free and minimally regulated market. Governments' role is to support the market by balancing their lean books, privatising community assets, and bullying individuals who cannot compete in society.

This view of the world is deeply held. Yet within a week or two the government has been persuaded to go heavily into debt, to prop up no-longer competitive businesses, to consider nationalising them if necessary, to give money to people who are unemployed and make it easier to for people suddenly employed to access benefits, and to listen to experts other than party-line economists in framing policy. All these measures effectively subordinate the economy to the health of the community. Though the change is explicable and commendable, I find surprising the lack of resistance to the betrayal of such a deeply rooted ideology.

These and such other such changes to conventional wisdom, such as the encouragement to work from home, will create a demand for broader change. **'When reflecting on the society that we wish to build after coronavirus, we need to go beyond rebuilding the priorities and the ways of working that were there before. They were clearly inadequate.'** The challenge will be to resist the pressure to return to business as usual, and to incorporate into our thinking about the economy and our shaping of society what we have learned of the importance of cooperation, communication, trust and generosity — in a word, love.

Read full article: https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/imagining-life-after-covid-19?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Thursday%2026%20March%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Thursday%2026%20March%202020+CID_fcdf0375c3da62e9909316189650b1e9&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=READ%20MORE

Creative Empathy in a Pandemic

[*Robert Koehler*](#), *Counterpunch*, March 23, 2020

One thing about a pandemic: It's inclusive. We cannot survive it, move beyond it, by protecting merely some people. We have to protect everyone.

Of all the disruption, paradox and chaos that have been unleashed by the coronavirus, this is the most stunning: It has something to teach us that we could never learn on our own. My God, we are one planet — one people. This isn't idealism; it's the most pragmatic social organizing principle possible.

As Robert Reich pointed out regarding the American public health system:

. . . we have a private for-profit system for individuals lucky enough to afford it and a rickety social insurance system for people fortunate enough to have a full-time job.

At their best, both systems respond to the needs of individuals rather than the needs of the public as a whole. In America, the word 'public' — as in public health, public education or public welfare — means a sum total of individual needs, not the common good.

But health equals wholeness. Without collective health, we have humanity shattered by greed and paranoia, that is to say, social hemorrhage, or what Randall Amster called business as usual: "The simmering cauldron of political vitriol, reifications of otherness, escalating inequality, endless war, even more endless waste, and a rapidly warming world hasn't exactly set us in good stead to weather the storm."

But here we are — all of us — stuck in isolation, disconnected from our parents, our children, our grandchildren, one another, even as we value them more than ever. There's no knowing how long this will last or what outcome awaits us. But if the best of who we are is able to prevail, we may find ourselves living through an extraordinary shift in human consciousness, a rewriting of our own mythology — as we come to understand that we manifest life-enhancing power with, not over, each other.

The word for this is love, a cynicism-producing word when linked to politics and social order. I use it cautiously, aware that its opposite is also alive and well, and that many (most?) people still believe that self-protection at some point means going to war . . . against a disease, against your neighbors.

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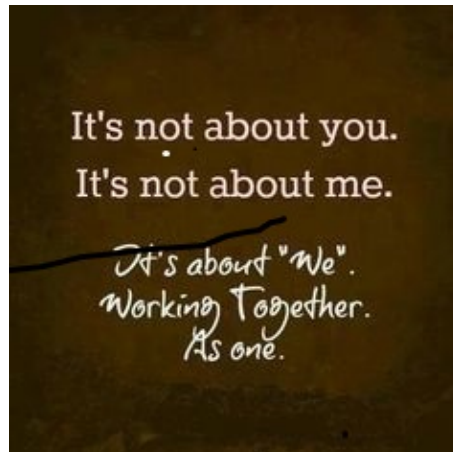
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And Ken Butigan declared:

The greatest social movement in human history is coming. Each of us is called to join it. It is a global movement, a movement of movements . . . rooted in the blood and tears of millions who have spent their lives throughout history clamoring for justice, working for peace, laboring for a world that works for everyone.

Just as all of us are, of necessity, isolated from each other, we are all participants, via our creative empathy, in this shift in human consciousness.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/03/23/creative-empathy-in-a-pandemic/>



REFLECTION



Nature's Invitation To Hope

*Dusk's rich beauty, restful light from the day
Welcome to nature's gift of mercy and hope.*

*Night's stillness to nourish untapped sources of hope from the day.
New wisdom surfacing from within the memories, fears, joys, hopes.
Deep sleep renewing energies for the morrows.*

*Dawn's gentle gift of light each new day
Offering nature's invitation to hope in living life this day.*

*Jude Butcher March 30, 2020. Inspired by a deepening awareness and
appreciation of nature's daily invitation to hope as we journey together facing
the challenges and fears of the Coronavirus.*

Br Jude Butcher cfc AM PhD

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

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