



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

January 2022 No.61

Dear Friends,

This 61st Edition of ERC Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

As we begin another year with much uncertainty and many unknown challenges that await us - let us always hold fast to the belief that we as an Edmund Rice Community always remain true to the three tenets of Edmund Rice: Compassion - Liberation - Presence.

My humanity is bound up with yours, for we can only be human together. *Desmond Tutu*

Please note that if you come up against a paywall in any of the articles below - please contact me at: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org and I will send you the full article.

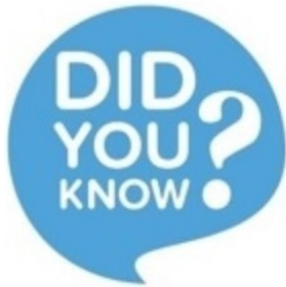
Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace & Blessings

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.



On Friday 28th January 2022 the Australian government will have detained men & women on Nauru for 3089 days and Manus Island/Port Moresby for 3061 days. The reason for the different numbers is that as of the 1st January 2022 The Australian Government has handed over responsibility (abandoned) for the 105 detainees left in PNG to the PNG Government.



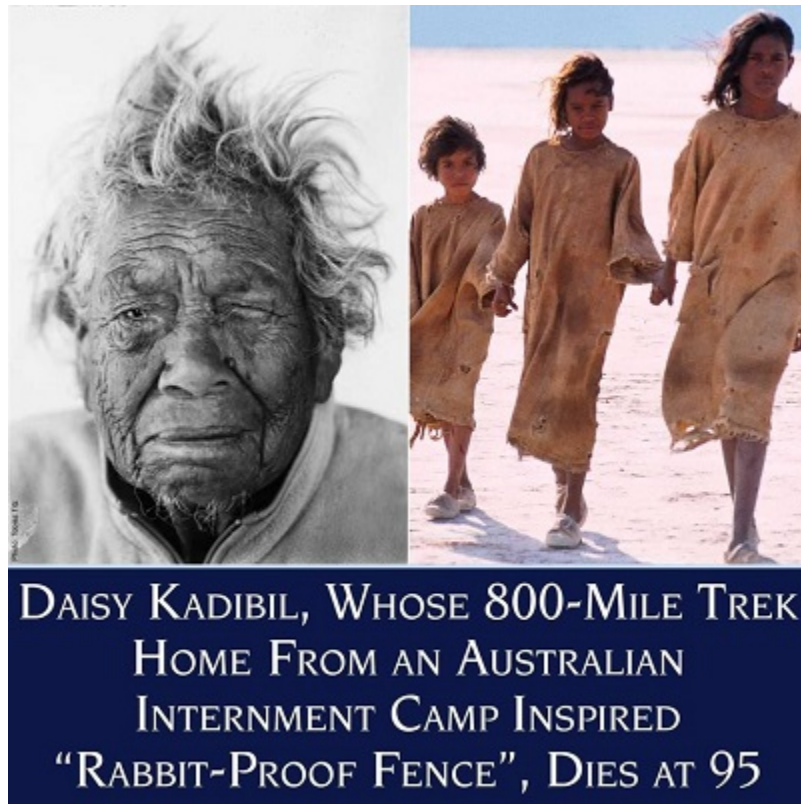
Oxfam International's latest report on global inequality entitled 'Inequality Kills' reports some shocking and startling facts of the increase of inequality during the pandemic:

- The wealth of the ten richest men has doubled, while the incomes of 99% of humanity are worse off, because of COVID -19.
- 252 men have more wealth than all 1 billion women and girls in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean combined.
- 3.4 million Black Americans would be alive today if their life expectancy was the same as White people's. Before COVID -19, that alarming number was 2.1 million.
- Inequality contributed to the death of 21,000 people each day during the pandemic while the wealthiest collectively got \$1.2 billion richer every 24hours. Inequality of income is a stronger indicator of whether one will die from COVID-19 than age.
- "Millions of people would be alive today if they had a vaccine... This

vaccine apartheid is taking lives, and it is supercharging inequalities worldwide" - Gabriela Bucher Executive Director Oxfam International

According to OXFAM, if just the top 10 billionaires alone paid a 99% tax on their windfall profits generated during the pandemic, it would be enough for "vaccines for every person in the world, universal healthcare, and social protection."





**St Mary's in Exile South Brisbane
Facebook Post, January 11th 2022**

Daisy Kadibil -- who was eight years old in 1931 when she escaped from an Australian internment camp along with her 14-year-old sister Molly and 10-year-old cousin Gracie -- was one of the Mighty Girl role models who passed away in 2018. The three girls' 800-mile (1,300 km) journey through the harsh Australian desert to return home inspired a book and the acclaimed film "Rabbit-Proof Fence." Daisy, who was the last surviving of the three, died in March at the age of 95. The extraordinary story of Daisy, Molly, and Gracie's nine-week trek introduced many people, both in Australia and around the world, to the tragedy of the "Stolen Generation", the tens of thousands of Australian Aboriginal children who were removed from their families between 1910 and 1970. "I come from Jigalong," Daisy wrote in a biographical note. "They took me away but I walked all around country back to where I was born. I came back." After the girls were taken from their home in Jigalong, an Indigenous community in northwestern Australia, they were brought to the Moore River Native Settlement, an internment camp just north of Perth. For sixty years, many Aboriginal children, particularly mixed-race children, were forcibly taken from their families and sent to such camps with the aim of assimilating them into white Australian society. Notoriously overcrowded and unsanitary, children at the camps experienced high rates of illness and premature death. After the

girls arrived at Moore River, they were determined to escape; Molly later declared "that place make me sick." After only one night, Molly led the two younger girls out of the camp and they started a long and dangerous journey home using the country-wide rabbit-proof fence as a guide. Along the way, they had to live off the land, sleep in dug-out rabbit burrows, and evade trackers hired by the government who looked for "absconding" children. Once they made it home, Daisy never left again; she spent many years working as a cook and housekeeper at ranches in the region, and passed on the traditions of the Martu people to her four children. Her story was virtually unknown until the 1990s, when her niece, Doris Pilkington Garimara, wrote "Follow The Rabbit-Proof Fence," based on her mother and aunt's experiences; Garimara had also been separated from her family and spent years at the Moore River camp. When the book was adapted into the movie "Rabbit-Proof Fence," Stephen Holden of the New York Times called it a "devastating portrayal" of Australia's "disgraceful treatment" of its Aboriginal population," observing that "on the side of wrong is the Australian government, which, for more than half a century, carried out this appalling program of legalized kidnapping." Lynne Craigie, president of the Shire of East Pilbara, where Daisy lived, says her memory will be preserved: "Daisy's remarkable story is an indelible part of the history of the Shire.... and one that will always be shared and never forgotten."



Steven Wei Ima/Unsplash, CC BY

The epic, 550-million-year story of Uluru, and the spectacular forces that led to its formation

Melanie Finch & Andrew Giles, The Conversation, 29th December 2021

Part of the magic of Uluru is the way it tricks your senses. Deep orange by day, at sunrise and sunset it appears to change colour, becoming a more vibrant shade of red, and then almost purple.

Its size also seems to change depending on your perspective. Approaching Uluru from afar you are struck by how small it appears. But as you get closer,

you realise it is truly a huge mountain, a behemoth in the middle of the comparatively flat Australian desert.

Australian geologists are now revealing yet another dimension to Uluru's magic: the spectacular forces that led to its formation.

Uluru is a time capsule. Within its sand grains there is an epic 550-million-year saga of continents colliding, mountains rising and falling, and the remarkable strength of our most iconic mountain.

Uluru is sacred

To the Anangu, Uluru is sacred. The Anangu are the owners of the land on which Uluru sits and they have long understood its magic.

Their Dreaming stories tell of the dramatic creation of Uluru and Kata Tjuta on the previously featureless Earth by ancestral creator beings known as the Tjukuritja or Waparitja.

If you get the opportunity to tour Uluru with a Traditional Owner you will hear stories about the significance of some of the dimples, caves and undulations, many of which have a unique and important place in Anangu culture.

Compared to the Traditional Owners, whose knowledge dates back several tens of thousands of years, scientists have only realised the significance of Uluru over the last 30 years or so.

Uluru's geological history has been revealed by assembling different types of data, like pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle. That puzzle is taking shape and the scene it reveals is perhaps even more spectacular than the rock itself.

To tell Uluru's story from the beginning we need to travel back in time 550 million years.

Read full story

https://theconversation.com/the-epic-550-million-year-story-of-ulu-u-and-the-spectacular-forces-that-led-to-its-formation-167040?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%2029%202021%20-%20162221409&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%2029%202021%20-%20162221409+CID_446021d53061c8070e2cb1cde6af4a4d&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=The%20epic%20550-million-year%20story%20of%20Uluu%20and%20the%20spectacular%20forces%20that%20led%20to%20its%20formation



(NATSICC)

Catholics asked to ‘strengthen support’ for First Peoples

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council has issued a statement for Australia Day, reflecting on this year’s theme: “Reflect. Respect. Celebrate”.

“By reflecting upon the theme on a personal level, we are assuming the responsibility for action and not leaving it to others to create change,” the statement reads.

“Combined with our innate desire, as Catholics, to become more like Christ, we are individually called to action to make Australia a country that more closely reflects our Christian beliefs of equality, respect and care for our poor and vulnerable.

“A nation built upon these beliefs is a strong and inclusive nation – something we all desire. However, a strong nation is built upon a strong foundation, and currently Australia’s foundations are undermined by its relationship with its First Peoples.”

To strengthen those foundations, NATSICC recommends the addition of a fourth verb to the Australia Day theme: “Do”.

“Words are easy and limitless, but actions require time, effort and commitment,” the statement says. “We ask that you make 2022 the year of ‘Do’.”

[Read full statement](#)

https://cathnews.com/index.php/media-releases/3074-220126-natsicc-australia-day-2022/fileolics-asked-to-strengthen-support-for-first-peoples?fbclid=IwAR2FNOpgg-oRWB4AFeEFd1jKU_fL9kTMIG7hWbBAWQoPL5Go6gINbGM2DKw



Activist and actor Bob Maza addresses a protest at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in front of Parliament House on July 30, 1972.

Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA

A short history of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy – an indelible reminder of unceded sovereignty

Bronwyn Carlson, Lynda June Coe, The Conversation, January 13th 2022

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this article contains names and images of deceased people.

Often people think about the Aboriginal Tent Embassy as something historic, dating back to the 1970s. But it should also be thought of as a site of the longest protest for Indigenous land rights, sovereignty and self-determination in the world.

In fact, this year, the Tent Embassy is set to celebrate its 50th continuous year of occupation. Demonstrating its significance to Australian history, it was included on the Commonwealth Heritage List in 2015 as part of the Old Parliament House precinct.

In this momentous year, it's worth remembering how the Tent Embassy came to be and what it has continued to stand for since its erection in 1972 – and the significance it still has today.

Aliens in our own land

The Tent Embassy began its public life on January 26 1972. On that day,

Michael Anderson, Billy Craigie, Bertie Williams and Tony Coorey left Redfern and drove to Ngunnawal Country (Canberra), where they planted a beach umbrella opposite Parliament House (now known as Old Parliament House).

They erected a sign that said “Aboriginal Embassy”. With them on that day was their driver, Tribune photographer Noel Hazard, who captured the event in a series of photos.

The term “embassy” was used to bring attention to the fact Aboriginal people had never ceded sovereignty nor engaged in any treaty process with the Crown. As a collective, Aboriginal people were the only cultural group not represented with an embassy.

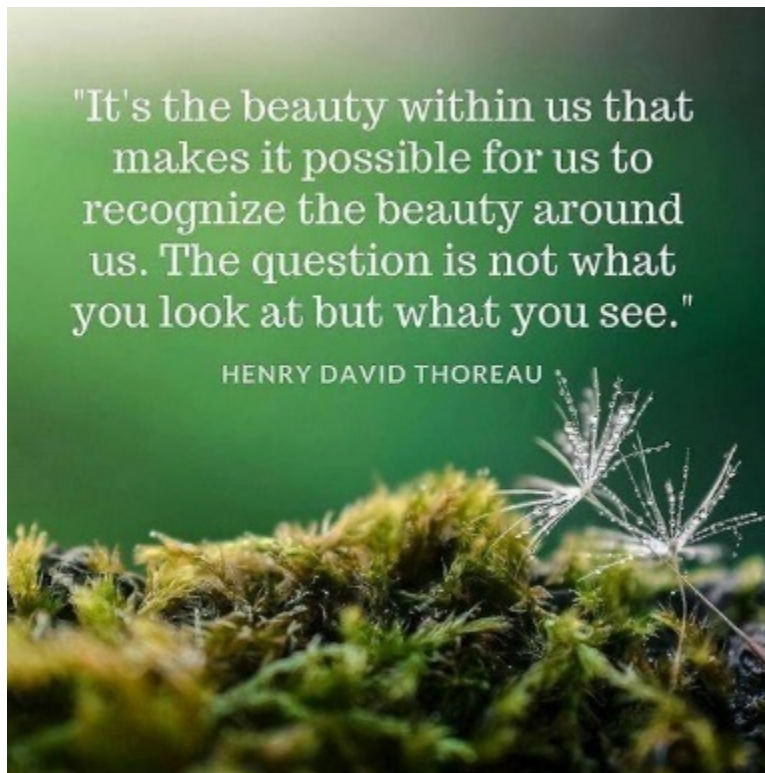
According to Aboriginal activist and scholar Gary Foley, the absence of an Aboriginal embassy in Canberra was a blatant indication Aboriginal people were treated like aliens in their own land.

Initially, the protesters were making a stand about land rights following the then prime minister William McMahon’s speech that dismissed any hope for Aboriginal land rights and reasserted the government’s position on the policy of assimilation. The Tent Embassy was therefore a public display of our disapproval of and objection to the policies and practices of the government.

In later years, it has become an acclaimed site of our continued resistance to the continuity of colonial rule.

Read full article

<https://theconversation.com/a-short-history-of-the-aboriginal-tent-embassy-an-indelible-reminder-of-unceded-sovereignty-174693>



Something in Australia's immigration detention policies must change. (Flickr/Ilias Bartolini)

The torture of asylum seekers has twisted our perceptions of right and wrong

Roderick St George, Pearls & Irritations, 21st January 2022

A whistleblower on the horrors of Manus Island laments the passing of an Australia that was welcoming, kind and caring.

Born into a multi-generational Australian family and raised in country Victoria, my life in most respects typified that of a 1960s child. There was nothing exceptional about me then and nor is there now. And while I am not an introvert, I love my solitude and only in rare circumstances do I feel a need to

make my voice heard. Witnessing injustice is one of those occasions.

I would not write of the matter below except that nine years of self-imposed silence has yielded no change to how most refugees are treated in this country.

On July 23, 2013, award-winning video journalist Mark Davis and I revealed to Australians via an SBS Dateline documentary the atrocities on Manus Island being conducted by their federal government. I had been apprehensive that elements of my colourful and meandering past, my youthful “wrong turnings”, might be made public and cast doubt on my credibility. But finally, and with relief, I simply threw caution to the wind, convinced there was more at stake than reputation.

I vividly remember lying on my bunk that first evening on the prison island, staring at the ceiling, trying in vain to put the experiences of the day into some sort of order and perspective. During the previous nine hours at the Manus Island regional processing centre I had already witnessed enough to realise why the Australian government treated the centre (read “prison”) with such secrecy. It needed to keep Australians ignorant of the conditions which allowed the Manus scheme to work.

New shocks came in the days that followed as I deduced or was informed by aid agency staff about the policies designed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, as it was known then, not only to make our jobs more complicated but to increase the suffering of those detained on the island. Clearly, the objective of the department was not only to punish those who had dared to flee their countries and ask for Australian shelter, but to ensure the prisoners – euphemistically referred to as detainees – had only one message for their families and friends: we were wrong to think of Australia as a compassionate country. Obviously, the message was getting through because the numbers of asylum seekers making it to Christmas Island had dwindled over the previous month.

Read full article:

<https://johnmenadue.com/the-torture-of-asylum-seekers-has-twisted-our-perceptions-of-right-and-wrong/>

‘I grew up in this cage’: Life inside the Park Hotel

Mehdi Ali, The Saturday Paper, No.381, January 8th-14th 2022

The darkest months in detention are always December and January. In these months, from the windows of our rooms at the Park Hotel, we see people celebrating with their loved ones another year that we’re away from ours. This past Christmas and new year has been my ninth spent in detention.

Two days before Christmas, around 1.30pm, I was lying on my bed watching a film when the door to my room opened quickly. The guard standing in the doorway seemed on edge. They usually knock first. "There's a fire," he said.

An alarm went off and the scene in the corridor was chaos. Serco guards ran in different directions while smoke filled the air. One of them had trouble breathing. The smell of the fire and the smoke reminded me of my family home burning down in Ahwaz, in south-west Iran.

We were directed to the lobby on the first floor of the hotel. Some of the other guys had been asleep and were in a state of shock and confusion, as was I. Outside I saw fire trucks, police cars and ambulances. Inside, I could not see a single Australian Border Force or Serco officer. At the entrance to the lobby and behind where the kitchen was, there were dozens of police officers. A few of us approached them and told them that we needed to get out, that we were not safe.

One of the police officers told us to calm down. "Calm down right now. You cannot leave the building."

I told him he did not have authority over us. "Home Affairs has authority over us. So tell ABF or Serco to come and speak to us."

But no one came to see us. We had no choice but to sit in the lobby while the building continued to burn. I could see terror on the other refugees' faces. The only refugee who left the building was a man who was hospitalised for smoke inhalation.

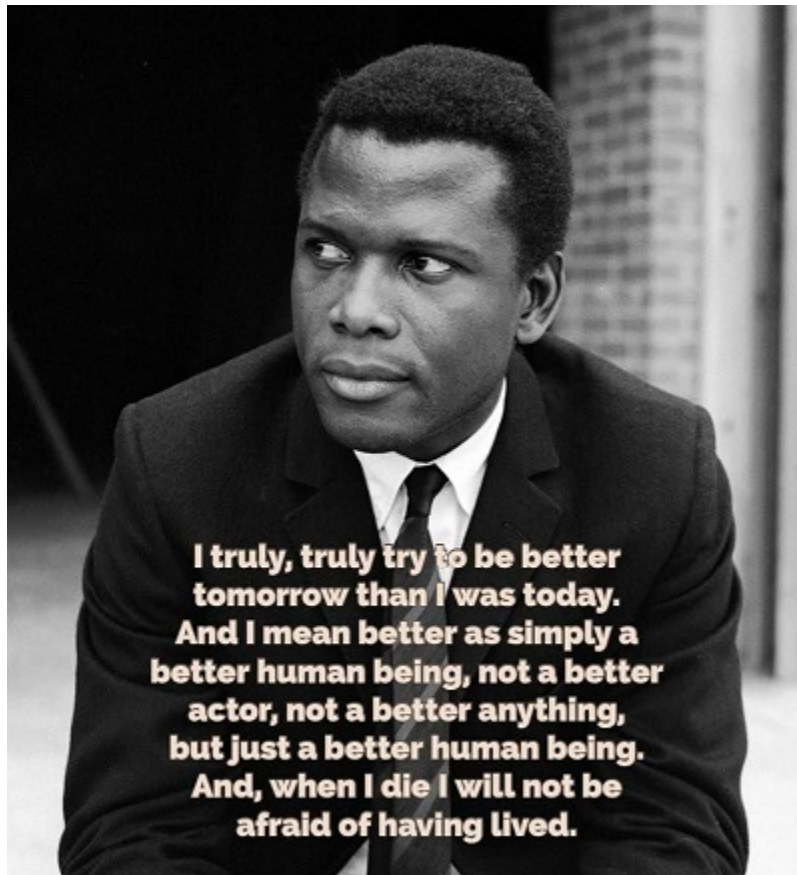
We sat in the lobby for hours with no Serco officers in sight. Some people were struggling to breathe. Bathroom access was limited, so some of us had to relieve ourselves in bottles.

The law tells us that children must only be detained for the shortest period of time, yet I grew up in this cage. Justice is all I ask for. I don't want to survive anymore. I just want to live.

Link to full article for subscribers:

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/topic/2022/01/08/i-grew-this-cage-life-inside-the-park-hotel/164156040013124>

NB: If you would like to read the full article and don't have a subscription please contact me mmcinerney@edmundrice.org



Young people have an opportunity to change the course of history on climate change. (Image: Unsplash)

Climate reality: A realistic path to a brighter future

James Hansen, Pearls and Irritations, December 27th 2021

The challenge for this generation of young people is to guide humanity and other life on our planet to a bright future.

Why is nobody telling young people the truth?

“We preserved the chance at COP26 to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.” What bullshit! “Solar panels are now cheaper than fossil

fuels, so all we are missing is political will.” What horse manure! “If we would just agree to consume less, the climate problem could be solved.” More nonsense!

Young people, I am sorry to say that — although the path to a bright future exists and is straightforward — it will not happen without your understanding and involvement in the political process. Ever since 2008 I have been amazed by your acumen and your ability to affect national elections and appreciate global issues. With appropriate focus, you can alter the course of our world in a good way. I hope that you find something in my experiences that helps you in your pursuit of a bright future.

Do not feel sorry for yourself or get discouraged. Yours is not the first generation to be dealt a bad hand. Some were born into great depressions. Some were sent to fight in world wars or senseless conflagrations in far away places such as Viet Nam or Iraq. Your battle will cover more years. Nature has a long time scale in its response to human-caused forces, and it takes time to alter human-made energy systems. But your cause is noble — your challenge is nothing short of guiding humanity and other life on our planet to a bright future.

The long time scales should not dishearten you. The slow response of nature provides the time that is needed to alter the infrastructure of our energy systems and improve land use practices. However, your task is now urgent. The next 10 years — the fourth decade since the adoption of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 — must be the decade in which young people take charge of their own destiny

Read full article

https://johnmenadue.com/climate-reality-a-realistic-path-to-a-brighter-future/?mc_cid=9f79dd5079&mc_eid=3424976a52



Greece grappled with the worst heatwave in decades last year that fuelled wildfires near Athens. AP Photo/Michael Pappas

Justice at the Heart of Climate Activism

The modern environmental justice movement understands the health of the planet and well-being of people are connected.

What comes to mind when hearing the word “environment?” A vast stretch of old-growth forest? A secluded mountain waterfall? Perhaps one of the 423 national parks of which the United States is so proud?

The trouble with these visions of the environment—and the traditional environmentalism that so earnestly strives to protect them—is that the environment is made up of so much more.

Awe-inspiring trees, yes, but also the branching underground networks of fungi they use to share nutrients and communicate. Instagram-worthy animals, yes, but

also scores of microscopic organisms that coevolved to support them in the soil, the water, and their own guts. The environment includes the air, the land, the flora, the fauna, and yes, people, along with everything that comes into contact with them—our cars, our construction projects, and our trash.

Indigenous communities and ancient cultures have always known this. And in contrast with earlier iterations of environmentalism, the environmental justice movement of today focuses on a similarly holistic understanding of what constitutes the environment.

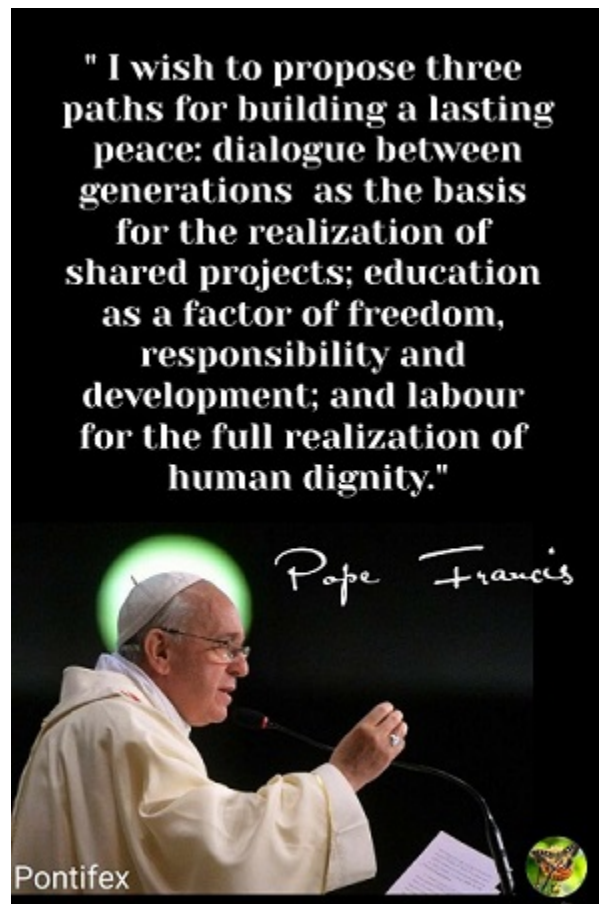
“The environment is not a place that is somehow separate from ourselves. It’s not some faraway place in nature where you travel to to get away from home,” says Vivian Huang, incoming co-director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network. “The environment is home. It is our workplace. It is the schools that we’re in. It’s our relationships to one another. It’s our communities. It’s us.”

Kiana Kazemi, the head of community operations at Intersectional Environmentalist, a nonprofit founded in 2020, defines modern environmentalism succinctly: “Understanding the interconnectedness of people and the planet.”

Looking at environmentalism through this lens, it’s no wonder that today’s movements take an active role in defining and fighting for environmental justice, rather than solely serving as preservers of natural splendor. This intersectional environmentalism considers advancing housing access, racial justice, and gender equity to be as essential to the movement as protecting clean water and air. In the past five years alone, new climate activism organizations like the Sunrise Movement, Zero Hour, Extinction Rebellion, and Fridays for Future, many of them founded and led by youth, have brought environmental justice into the mainstream.

Read full article

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/a-new-social-justice/2021/11/15/justice-at-the-heart-of-climate-activism>



To End 'Deafening Noise of War,' Pope Says Nations Must Fund Education Over Weapons

Andrea Germanos, Common Dreams, December 21st, 2021

"The pursuit of a genuine process of international disarmament can only prove beneficial for the development of peoples and nations," the pope said in his World Peace Day message.

Pope Francis has released a new peace message in which he rebukes soaring military spending and praises work and activism that uplift the common good.

"The deafening noise of war and conflict is intensifying," Francis said, lamenting the global pandemic, worsening climate crisis, and an economic model that eschews solidarity.

The remarks came in his message for World Peace Day, held on January 1. The message was released by the Vatican Tuesday and signed December 8.

A three-pronged approach to peace is laid out, with necessary steps involving intergenerational dialogue, education, and labor.

A need "for an intergenerational partnership" is clear especially regarding "our common home," he said, referring to the environment.

On that front, Francis nodded to youth activists worldwide.

"We ought to esteem and encourage all those young people who work for a more just world, one that is careful to safeguard the creation entrusted to our stewardship," he said. "They go about this with restlessness, enthusiasm, and most of all a sense of responsibility before the urgent change of direction required by the challenges emerging from the present ethical and socio-environmental crisis."

Despite being "essential for the defense and promotion of peace," the pope said that investments in education have seen reductions. At the same time, military expenditures "increased beyond the levels at the end of the Cold War," he said, "and they seem certain to grow exorbitantly."

"It is high time," said Francis, "that governments develop economic policies aimed at inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry."

Doing so will have far-reaching benefits, he said.

"The pursuit of a genuine process of international disarmament can only prove beneficial for the development of peoples and nations," said Francis, "freeing up financial resources better used for healthcare, schools, infrastructure, care of the land, and so forth."

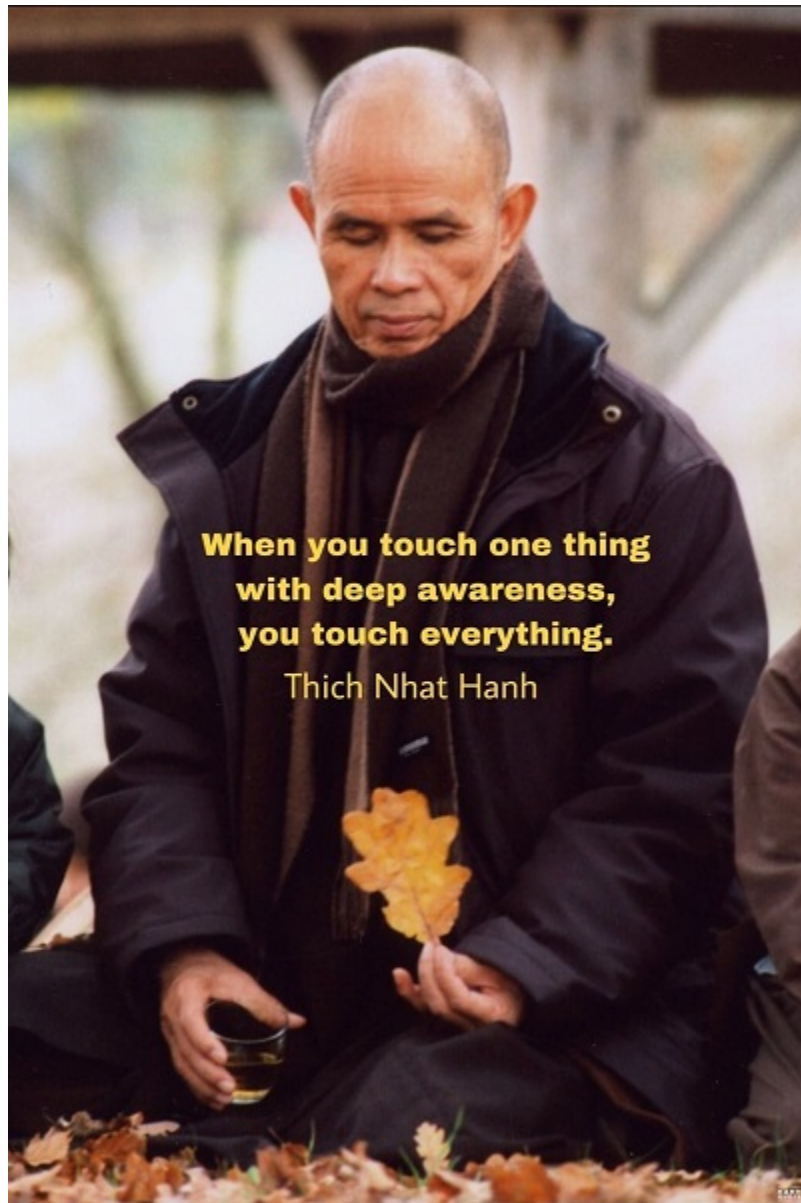
Pope's Message World Day of Peace January 1st 2022

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/20211208-messaggio-55giornatamondiale-pace2022.html>

Read Full Article

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2021/12/21/end-deafening-noise-war-pope-says-nations-must-fund-education-over-weapons>

REFLECTIONS.



"I asked the leaf whether it was frightened because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling.

The leaf told me,

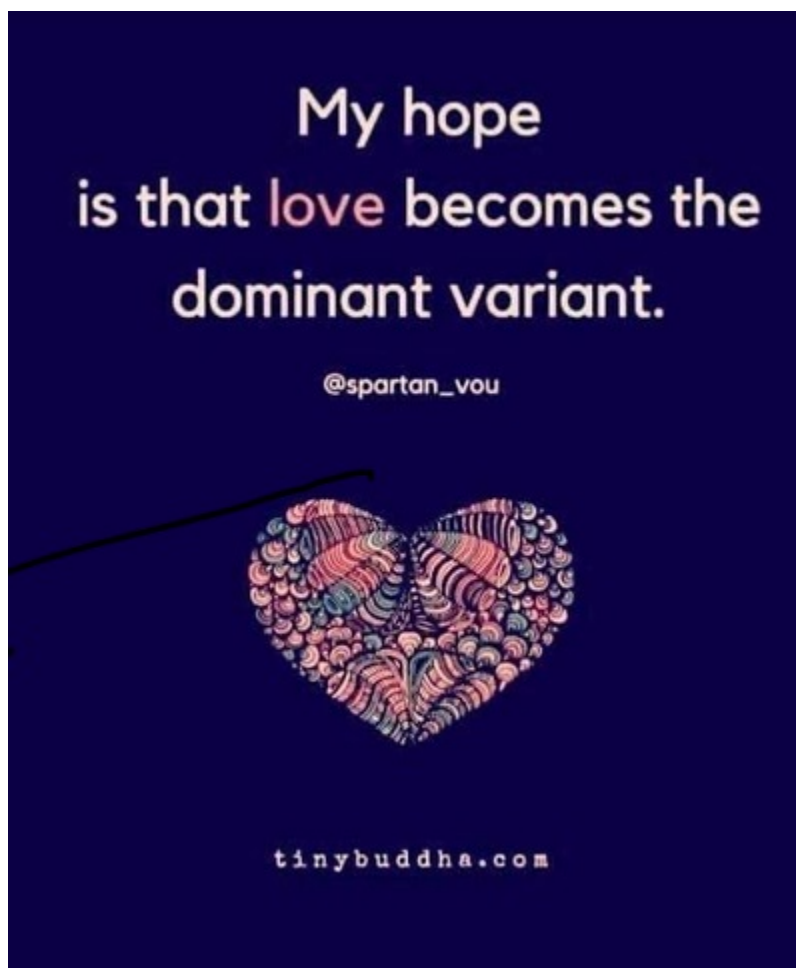
"No. During the whole spring and summer, I was completely alive. I worked hard to help nourish the tree, and now much of me is in the tree. I am not limited by this form. I am also the whole tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. So I don't worry at all. As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, 'I will see you again very soon.'"

That day, there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leave the branch and float down to the soil, dancing joyfully. It was so happy.

I bowed my head, knowing that I have a lot to learn from the leaf.

So please look and you will see that you have always been here. Let us look together and penetrate into the life of a leaf, so we may be one with the leaf. Let us penetrate and be one with everything, to realize our own nature and be free from fear. If we look very deeply, we will transcend birth and death.

Tomorrow, I will continue to be. But you will have to be very attentive to see me. I will be a flower, or a leaf. I will be in these forms and I will say hello to you. If you are attentive enough, you will recognize me, and you may greet me. I will be very happy." Thich Nhat Hanh RIP



Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

"I would rather be a man of conviction than a man of conformity. Occasionally in life one develops a conviction so precious and meaningful that he will stand

on it till the end. That is what I have found in nonviolence." Martin Luther King Jr.

"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph." Haile Selassie

"I think the practical person has a better chance of dealing with nonviolence than people who tend to be dreamers or who are impractical. We're not nonviolent because we want to save our souls. We're nonviolent because we want to get some social justice for the workers." Cesar Chavez

***"It's not you who should solve my problems, God,
but I yours, God of the asylum-seekers.
It's not you who should feed the hungry,
but I who should protect your children
from the terror of the banks and armies.
It's not you who should make room for the refugees,
but I who should receive you,
hardly hidden God of the desolate.
You dreamed me, God,
Practicing walking upright
and learning to kneel down,
more beautiful that I am now,
happier than I dare to be,
freer than our country allows.
Don't stop dreaming me, God.
I don't want to stop remembering
that I am your tree,
planted by the streams
of living water."*** Dorothee Soelle



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.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.

Our mailing address is:

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