

Stirrings



Clifford Harper

A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Fall 2017

IS THE USA
OUT OF
CONTROL?
2

RE-
CLAIMING
GOTHAM
2

TUTU TO
AUNG SU
SAN KYI
3

NON-
VIOLENCE
OF JESUS
4

CATHOLIC
NON-
VIOLENCE
5

BLUE
SCARVES
IN CANADA
6

AFGHAN
BLUE
SCARVES
7

LOSS AND
SURVIVAL
IN MOVIES
8

In 1996, Australia Enacted Strict Gun Laws. They Have Been Extremely Effective

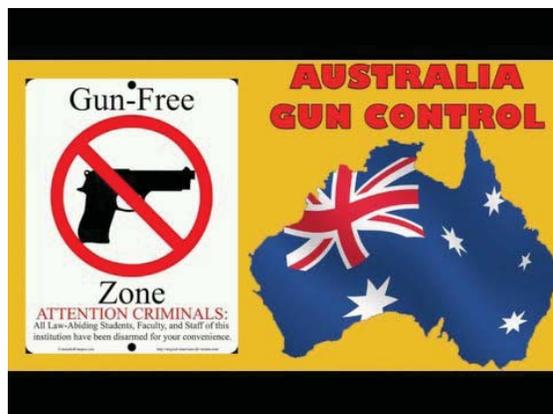
By Will Oremus

As America grapples with the fallout of yet another mass shooting—the massacre of a 59 people at a music festival in Las Vegas—the long and bitter debate over gun control in America will inevitably be reopened. After Sandy Hook, Will Oremus highlighted the lessons of Australia’s strict gun laws and the resulting success in preventing subsequent mass shootings there. The post is reprinted below.

On April 28, 1996, a gunman opened fire on tourists in a seaside resort in Port Arthur, Tasmania. By the time he was finished, he had killed 35 people and wounded 23 more. It was the worst mass murder in Australia’s history.

Twelve days later, Australia’s government did something remarkable. Led by newly elected conservative Prime Minister John Howard, it announced a bipartisan deal with state and local governments to enact sweeping gun-control measures. A decade and a half hence, the results of these policy changes are clear: They worked really, really well.

At the heart of the push was a massive buyback of more than 600,000 semi-automatic shotguns and rifles, or about one-fifth of all firearms in circulation in Australia. The country’s new gun laws prohibited private sales, required that all weapons be individually registered to their owners, and required that gun buyers present a “genuine reason” for needing each weapon at the time of the purchase. (Self-defense did not count.) In the wake of the tragedy, polls showed public support for these measures at upwards of 90 percent.

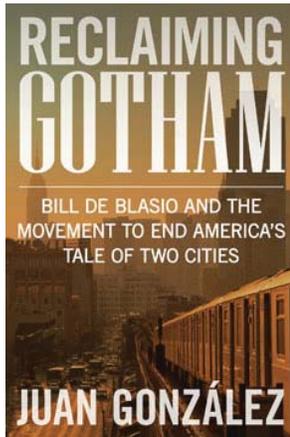


What happened next has been the subject of several academic studies. Violent crime and gun-related deaths did not come to an end in Australia, of course. But as the Washington Post’s Wonkblog pointed out in August, homicides by firearm plunged 59 percent between 1995

and 2006, with no corresponding increase in non-firearm-related homicides. The drop in suicides by gun was even steeper: 65 percent. Studies found a close correlation between the sharp declines and the gun buybacks. Robberies involving a firearm also dropped significantly. Meanwhile, home invasions did not increase, contrary to fears that firearm ownership is needed to deter such crimes. But here’s the most stunning statistic. In the decade before the Port Arthur massacre, there had been eleven mass shootings in the country. There hasn’t been a single one in Australia since.

Whether the same policies would work as well in the United States—or whether similar legislation would have any chance of being passed here in the first place—is an open question.

continued on page 2



Reclaiming Gotham

Bill de Blasio
and the Movement
to End America's
Tale of Two Cities

By Juan González

Reviewed by Leo Reilly CSB

At nearly six and a half feet tall, with a youthful but imposing appearance and a very eloquent tongue, Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York, has reversed the neoliberal agenda of Mayor Bloomberg (2001-20012), who catered to the rich at the expense of the poor, and has introduced a city-wide revolution that includes a successful Head Start program for three-year olds, equitable funding for parks, resolution of long-standing labour disputes, a municipal identification card that includes the undocumented, after-school programs, parental leave and broadband for all. De Blasio is part of a nation-wide reaction to the Depression of 2008 with its subprime loans scandals and foreclosures on the poor that has elected mayors in New York, Pittsburgh, Newark, Minneapolis and Boston.

As a reporter at the New York Daily News, González asked to specialize on reporting on land-use planning and observed the operation of the neoliberal “growth” model that maximized profits over the “use” model that prioritized resident needs. In Chapter 4, “The High Cost of Mayor Bloomberg’s New York,” he details the scandalous assignment of land to projects to the wealthy, especially the land for the new Yankee Stadium, at the expense of the poor and concludes regarding the vaunted privatization schemes of Bloomberg, 2001-2013, that “In one of the greatest ironies of modern urban politics, New York City taxpayers were bilked for hundreds of millions of dollars under a mayor who had boasted of being an expert in technology and management” (p. 125).

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A Peace & Justice Newsletter
A project of the Basilian Centre for Peace & Justice

Editorial Team

Neil Hibberd, Bob Holmes, Leo Reilly, Maurice Restivo

De Blasio capitalized on Republican unpopularity following Bloomberg’s devious means of securing a third term, despite term limits, and came from behind to secure the Democratic nomination. In his younger days, he worked in Guatemala with followers of Liberation Theology and although, like his mother, he does not attend church he works with the churches and attended Pope Francis’ gathering on the climate in 2015. De Blasio has a mixed-race marriage and in a famous TV ad, his son lists what his father would do as mayor and ends by remarking that he would say the same even if he were not de Blasio’s son. De Blasio is openly anti-Trump and is certainly a possibility for a general election against him.

Juan González, the author, is co-anchor with Amy Goodman on DemocracyNow: The War and Peace Report, and is described by Tom Robbins, a respected journalist, as “a person whose radical light has never dimmed” and “simply one of the greatest urban reporters of our time.”



Massive Buyback of more than 600,000 Semi-automatic Guns and Rifles

continued from page 1

Howard, the conservative leader behind the Australian reforms, wrote an op-ed in an Australian paper after visiting the United States in the wake of the Aurora shootings. He came away convinced that America needed to change its gun laws, but lamented its lack of will to do so.

There is more to this than merely the lobbying strength of the National Rifle Association. So deeply embedded is the gun culture of the US, that millions of law-abiding, Americans truly believe that it is safer to own a gun, based on the chilling logic that because there are so many guns in circulation, one’s own weapon is needed for self-protection. To put it another way, the situation is so far gone there can be no turning back.

That’s certainly how things looked after the Aurora shooting. But after Sandy Hook [and Las Vegas] , with the nation shocked and groping for answers once again, I wonder if Americans are still so sure that we have nothing to learn from Australia’s example.

This article was posted 2 October 2017 on Slate Magazine at <http://www.slate.com>. Will Oremus is Slate’s senior technology writer.

An open letter from Desmond Tutu to Aung San Su Kyi



7 SEPTEMBER 2017,
ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS DESMOND TUTU

My dear Aung San Su Kyi,

I am now elderly, decrepit and formally retired, but breaking my vow to remain silent on public affairs out of profound sadness about the plight of the Muslim minority in your country, the Rohingya.

In my heart you are a dearly beloved younger sister. For years I had a photograph of you on my desk to remind me of the injustice and sacrifice you endured out of your love and commitment for Myanmar's people. You symbolised righteousness. In 2010 we rejoiced at your freedom from house arrest, and in 2012 we celebrated your election as leader of the opposition.

Your emergence into public life allayed our concerns about violence being perpetrated against members of the Rohingya. But what some have called 'ethnic cleansing' and others 'a slow genocide' has persisted – and recently accelerated. The images we are seeing of the suffering of the Rohingya fill us with pain and dread.

We know that you know that human beings may look and worship differently – and some may have greater firepower than others – but none are superior and none inferior; that when you scratch the surface we are all the same, members of one family, the human family; that there are no natural differences between Buddhists and Muslims; and that whether we are Jews or Hindus, Christians or atheists, we are born to love, without prejudice. Discrimination doesn't come naturally; it is taught.

My dear sister: If the political price of your ascension to the highest office in Myanmar is your silence, the price is surely too steep. A country that is not at peace with itself, that fails to acknowledge and protect the dignity and worth of all its people, is not a free country.

It is incongruous for a symbol of righteousness to lead such a country; it is adding to our pain.

As we witness the unfolding horror we pray for you to be courageous and resilient again. We pray for you to speak out for justice, human rights and the unity of your people. We pray for you to intervene in the escalating crisis and guide your people back towards the path of righteousness again.

God bless you.
Love
Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu



Nonviolence - Taking Jesus Seriously



By
Richard
Rohr

How is it that after two thousand years of meditation on Jesus Christ we've managed to avoid everything that he taught so unequivocally?

This is true of every Christian denomination, even those who call themselves orthodox or doctrinally pure. We are all “cafeteria Christians.” All of us have evaded some major parts of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): the Beatitudes, Jesus' warning about idolizing “mammon,” his clear directive and example of nonviolence, and his command to love our enemies being the most obvious. Jesus has always been too much for us. He is the only true “orthodoxy” as far as I can see.

In fact, I have gone so far as to say, if Jesus never talked about it once, the churches will tend to be preoccupied with it (abortion, birth control, and homosexuality are current examples), and if Jesus made an unequivocal statement about it (for example, the rich, the camel, and the eye of a needle), we tend to quietly shelve it and forget it. This is not even hard to prove.

At least one reason for our failure to understand Jesus' clear teaching on nonviolence lies in the fact that the Gospel has primarily been expounded by a small elite group of educated European and North American men. The bias of white male theologians is typically power and control. From this perspective nonviolence and love of enemies makes no sense.

Because most of the church has refused to take Jesus' teaching and example seriously, now much of the world refuses to take Christians seriously. “Your Christianity is all in the head,” they say. “You Christians love to talk of a new life, but the



record shows that you are afraid to live in a new way—a way that is responsible, caring, and nonviolent. Even your ‘pro-life movement’ is much more pro-birth than pro-life.”

Like it or not, the church is finally becoming much more universal in its teaching. Marginalized and oppressed groups have a wealth of insights to offer us in reading the Gospel. The New Testament is being rediscovered



by altogether different sets of eyes, raising very different questions and perspectives that we just never thought about before. We are just beginning to honor the voices of women, minorities, and many groups that have not had access to the power, privilege, and comforts of past theologians. Frankly, they represent the peoples who first heard the Gospel and allowed it to radically change their lives.

The big questions are more and more being answered at a peaceful and dialogical level, with no need to directly oppose, punish, or reject other people or religions. I sense the urgency of the Holy Spirit, with 7.5 billion humans now on the planet at the same time.

Our future is either nonviolent or there is no future at all. Ken Butigan writes in the foreword to John Dear's book, *The Nonviolent Life*:

“[This is] the urgency of the great choice we face as a species: will we choose to continue to affirm a culture of systemic violence—or will we build a culture of active, creative, and liberating nonviolence so that we can not only survive but thrive?”

Catholic Nonviolence Initiative Launches Global Roundtables

By Rosemarie Berger

(Senior Associate Editor, *Sojourners Magazine*)

It's been a busy summer! Below is an update on the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project I've been deeply involved in. Amid the chaotic violence in the USA and around the world, I'm grateful to have this opportunity to contribute toward building positive peace – and grateful to *Sojourners* for supporting me in it!

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI) is focused on promoting a renewed commitment to Gospel nonviolence at the heart of the Church, including the possibility of a new official teaching on nonviolence.

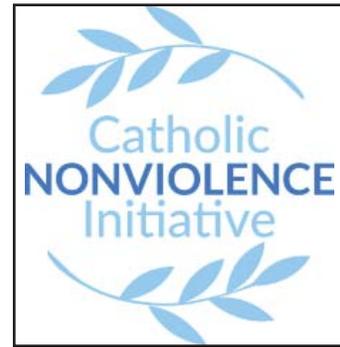
One part of our work toward this goal is to research and elaborate on the theological, scriptural, ecclesial and practical components of nonviolence. In order to do this, we have organized five “roundtables” each of which includes between 7-20 participants from around the world. Each roundtable, addressing a particular topic, ultimately will produce a well-curated document by the end of 2018; hopefully at that time, representatives from each group will meet for a second conference on nonviolence and just peace.

We're humbled by the number of theologians and peace practitioners who have agreed to participate in these roundtables – all five groups have now started their work via on-line conversations.

1. Toward a foundational theology of nonviolence

This roundtable process will research, map and elaborate a comprehensive theology of nonviolence as a foundational basis for the Church's re-commitment to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence.

Co-conveners: Ken Butigan (Chicago, USA), Jose Henriquez (Galway, Ireland) and Maria Clara Bingemer (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

2. The biblical foundations of nonviolence

including its centrality to the life and mission of Jesus: This roundtable process will illuminate the biblical roots of active nonviolence and the Gospel nonviolence at the core of Jesus' life, mission, and way, and thus at the core of the life, mission, and way of the Church.

Co-conveners: Sr. Teresia Wamuyu Wachira (Nairobi, Kenya) and Terrence Rynne (Milwaukee, USA).

3. Nonviolence and Just Peace

A new moral framework for Catholic theology in the context of a violent world: This roundtable process will re-search and frame a new moral framework rooted in Gospel nonviolence in response to the violence and injustice of our time.

Co-conveners: Marie Dennis (Washington, DC, USA) and John Ashworth (Nairobi, Kenya).

4. Integrating Gospel nonviolence at every level of the Church

This roundtable process will imagine and elaborate concrete ways Gospel nonviolence can be explicitly integrated into the life of the Church.

Co-conveners: Gerry Lee (Washington, DC, USA), Fr. Boniface Mendes (Pakistan) and Fr. Felix Mushobozi (Rome, Italy).

5. The power of nonviolence

Concrete experience, principles, methods, and effectiveness – Past, present, and envisioned future: This roundtable will comprehensively profile active nonviolence—its dynamics, its impact, its history, its contemporary applications, and a series of concrete examples—and frame how it can be spread and applied globally to respond to the monumental challenges of our time.

Co-conveners: Pat Gaffney (London, UK) and Rosemarie Berger (Washington, DC, USA).



By Rosemary Keenan

35 - 40 Peace Walkers journeyed through downtown Toronto led by youth from Camp Micah. Each of us wore a blue scarf in recognition of the Blue Scarf Global Peace Movement which was begun by a brave group of Afghan women in war-torn Kandahar who gathered to publicly pray for peace. In 2011 the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers turned the Blue Scarf events into a Global Peace Movement.

At the **American Consulate** we reflected on the futility of war and nuclear arms. We must continue relentlessly to urge our Prime Minister and political leaders to sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty, to choose peace



International Day of Peace

Blue Scarf Peace Walk in Toronto

and diplomacy, not war, and to invest money and resources to meet human need not human greed.

At the “**Homeless Jesus**” sculpture by Regis College we heard the words of a homeless friend and her experiences of isolation, poverty and exclusion. She reminded us of Matthew’s gospel and our responsibility to care for one another, especially the most vulnerable and those who have no voice.



north of Harbord Street, in the centre of **Philosopher’s Walk** to reflect on its significance as an Indigenous people’s gathering place by the river, now buried due to urban expansion.

At **Queen’s Park** we sat under the shade of birch, maple and butternut trees while Fr. Bob Holmes spoke of



the incredible beauty of our universe, and our earth, and our responsibility to care for our common home.

On a shady lawn near the **Soldiers Tower** on the U of T campus, Carolyn Sue Kralik spoke to us about White Poppies for Peace, and the rejection of the ‘just war’ theory by Pope Francis and the Catholic Non-violence Initiative.

We gathered at the stone Ampitheatre

We are learning that we must listen to the leadership of Indigenous voices in Canada. We must shed light on the injustices of colonialism.

We must learn to protect the earth and each other. Shannon Neufeldt of KAIROS, spoke to us of the importance of fulfilling the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We reflected on the ongoing travesty of violence against women, and the 14 trees planted

further along Philosopher’s Walk, commemorating the 14 young women who were killed by a gunman at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Dec. 6, 1989. More recently, in March 2017, red dresses were displayed on the trees along Philosopher’s Walk, as a representation of the Indigenous women and girls lost to violent crime.

In conclusion we sang together, Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Rosemary Keenan is a member of Pax Christi Toronto, co-sponsors of the Peace Walk with Camp Micah and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity

International Day of Peace

Afghan Youth on the Road to Nonviolent Peace

By Dr. Hakim
23rd September 2017

I was a little nervous before the Conference. War is raging on in almost all Afghan provinces. Would these war-divided youth relate well across their different ethnicities? Would they consider nonviolence possible or practical? The short answer was 'yes', as expressed in the poem.

Tired of today's war-driven peace, youth from 24 out of 34 Afghan provinces began their pursuit of nonviolent peace at the 'Youth on the Road to Peace Conference' from the 18th to the 21st of September 2017.

In April 2017, the Afghan Peace Volunteers responded to Trump's dropping of the 'Mother of All Bombs' on Afghanistan by reaching out to the 34 Afghan provinces through a campaign to abolish war, called 'Mother'. As efforts grew, they decided it would be better to build visions and friendships face-to-face, so they invested their hard work, love and courage in organizing the Conference.

Taking the risk of insecure roads to gather in Kabul, the participants learnt about nonviolent relationships with Mother Earth (including an introduction to permaculture) and all in the borderfree human family. They learnt to use conflict resolution tools and skills. The Conference ended with the International Day of Peace celebrations, and an agreement by the youth to create Peace Parks or similar nonviolent peace-building initiatives in their home provinces.



No prison or government
can restrain this awakened love.
No President will be able to withstand
the nonviolent consciousness
arising from even the most challenging of places.
It is a beautiful human development
that has taken time to evolve,
but, clearly, humankind has understood
that consumerism, inequality and war
aren't sustainable;
these have diseased our planet
and our relationships.

His face lit up,
his spirit understood his own mortality
and he said, "This is well worth
the danger I took in coming here."

I ventured a question, warily,
"Do you think that putting 'extremists' in prison
changes them?"
They shook their heads emphatically.
Their unanimous 'no, no and of course not'
zoomed in on me from all tangents
of the circle we usually sat in,
and transported me to a heart-racing vision:
a world without incarceration,
gun-wielding police and armies.
This was not a dream.

When the participants signed the agreement
to build a Peace Park in every province,
Hassibullah from Khost shyly used his thumb-print
because he 'hadn't practiced his signature before'.

I could see his indomitable strength.
I could see his practical, gentle ways,
turning the bullets, bombs, tanks,
drones and fighter jets
into wimpy, obsolete objects.

Dr. Hakim - a pseudonym to protect identity.

Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening

Loss & Survival

By Cynthia Watson



Wind River: Taylor Sheridan, actor turned screenwriter, makes his directorial debut with this smart, solid crime movie. When a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tracker (Jeremy Renner) stumbles upon the body of a young Native American girl while hunting some troublesome mountain lions on the Wind River Indian Reserve, he finds himself teaming with the local Tribal Police Chief (a rock-solid performance by Canadian, Graham Greene) and a very unprepared FBI agent (Elizabeth Olsen) in an effort to locate the killer.

This movie is a tight, tense, well-written, well-paced thriller, but it is not a typical whodunit; ***Wind River*** is deep and deals with some very serious issues. Aside from being a well-made movie, the film also draws attention to the horrific fact that in the United States, no one knows how many Native American women have disappeared. This draws some very disturbing parallels to a similar crisis occurring in Canada. It offers a glimpse at what life is like for the people living on one of the United States' largest Indian Reservations ('reservation' is used in the United States, while in Canada, 'reserve' is the proper legal term). It also showcases how different people deal with the eerie "snow and silence" of Wyoming.

I highly recommend ***Wind River***, however, there are some extremely graphic and disturbing scenes of violence that are so realistic and visceral, it left me feeling very unsettled—maybe that was the goal. This film depicts people on both sides of the law equally drawn to violence and corruption. One side just believes they're doing it for the right reasons. But, using redemptive violence to fight evil does not heal. Christians know that justice is not the bad guys getting what they deserve. Justice is the bad guys getting transformed and set free.

The Eichmann Show: This 2015 film was released on Netflix September 1, 2017. It is the brilliant and fast-paced BBC production of the true story about the live 1961 broadcast of Nazi mass-murderer Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem after he was captured by Mossad and Shin Bet agents on the streets of Buenos Aires, where he had been living under the name of Ricardo Klement since 1952. He was smuggled back to Israel and put on trial for genocide for his leading part as architect of the Final Solution.

The Eichmann Show focuses on the story of groundbreaking American film producer Milton Fruchtman (Martin Freeman), who was given the job of televising the so-called "Trial of the Century" in Jerusalem. He hires Leo Hurwitz (Anthony LaPaglia), a gifted documentary film-maker who has been blacklisted in the U.S. under McCarthy and has barely worked for a decade. LaPaglia perfectly portrays an intellectual obsessed by the nature of evil and Eichmann's refusal to admit his guilt, or in any other way acknowledge the crime he had perpetrated.



Indeed, Hurwitz threatens to quit when he fails to catch Eichmann showing even a modicum of emotion while watching films in court of the atrocities. Fruchtman pleads with Hurwitz to stay and tries to convince him of the huge international impact of the trial, and how broadcasting the eye-witness testimony of survivors to huge audiences around the world will shed wider light than ever before to the near destruction of European Jewry.

Ultimately, Hurwitz comprehends when, eating alone at his hotel, he is approached by his stoic hotelier, Mrs. Landau (a brief but stellar performance by Rebecca Front). Showing him the concentration camp tattoo on her arm, she says, "When we first arrived here, they did not believe us. They said such things were not possible. So, we stopped speaking about it . . . now they listen."

The Eichmann Show is superbly written and cast, and beautifully underacted by all. It is a powerful exploration of both the nature of evil and the peculiar power of television.