Reflections for Nonviolent Community

A Book of Readings

The Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance

October - November 2018
Remembering our friend and colleague, Tom Egan, who died September 12, 2018, in Austin, TX. Tom was, with Jeanie, relentless in his pursuit of justice and a stalwart supporter of OREPA’s work to rid the world of nuclear weapons. We remember him at Sunday vigils, public hearings, the Walk for Nonviolence, our World Court reading, and in so many other ways…

About this booklet

This booklet, published bi-monthly by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, embraces many members of our peace community. The booklet is intended to build spiritual community. It is available for no charge to those who request it. Those who are using the book are asked to participate by contributing readings to it.

The common thread in these reflections is the struggle of human beings to improve the world. In OREPA, our struggle to end bomb production in Oak Ridge is part of that struggle. In these reflections, we join ourselves with the larger community that works to heal the world.

From the outset, the reflection booklet has been provided free of charge. If you are able to make a donation to cover the cost of your booklet, it would be greatly appreciated. A gift of $20 would cover the cost of paper, printing and mailing for one year. If you are unable to make a donation, please continue to accept the reflection booklet and use it.

Each Thursday, in addition to our reflection, you will find the name of a member of our community who is using this reflection booklet. This is an opportunity to think a little about that person and all those who work for peace on her/his day.

‡ contributions, suggestions, requests can be sent to OREPA, P O Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 or by e-mail to orep@earthlink.net

Sources

Readings for the reflection booklet this month were contributed by Mary Dennis Lentsch and Tom Egan. Thursday readings taken from The Door by Margaret Atwood, The Simple Truth by Philip Levine, and Available Light by Marge Piercy.
Monday, October 1

In my mind, the evil we evoke with nuclear weapons is nothing less than the end of the world and the loss of our souls.
~ Tom Egan

Tuesday, October 2
GANDHI’S BIRTHDAY

To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of human beings.
~ Gandhi

Wednesday, October 3

In the South, we knew our adversary would stop at nothing to silence our activism. We knew we could never match his (sic) readiness to annihilate our resistance. So we ceded him that ground and challenged him instead to defend himself against the work of loving peace.
~ John Lewis
Nobody cares who wins wars.  
They care at the moment:  
they like the parades, the cheering;  
but after that, winning diminishes  
A silver cup on the mantle  
engraved with some year or other;  
a hoard of buttons cut from corpses  
as souvenirs; a shameful thing  
you did in white-hot anger shoved  
back out of sight.  
Bad dreams, a bit of loot.  
There’s not much to say about it.  

_That was a fine time_, you think,  
_I’ve never felt more alive._  
Nontheless, victory puzzles you.  
Some days you forget where you’ve put it,  
though younger men make speeches about it  
as if they had been there, too.  

Of course it’s better to win  
than not. Who wouldn’t prefer it?  
Losing, though. That’s different.  
Defeat grows like a mutant vegetable,  
swelling with the unsaid.  
It’s always with you, spreading underground,  
feeding on what’s gone missing:  
your son, your sister, your father’s house,  
the life you should have had.  
It’s never in the past, defeat.  
It soaks into the present,  
it stains even the morning sun  
the color of burnt earth.  

At last it breaks the surface.  
It bursts. It bursts into song.  
Long songs, you understand.  
They go on and on.  

~ Margaret Atwood
Friday, October 5

1923 : PHIL BERRIGAN BORN

Jim Crow is still around, but Jim Crow is old. The problem is that Jim Crow has children. The one we’ve got to battle is James Crow Jr., Esquire. He’s a little more educated. He’s a little slicker. He’s a little more polished. But the results are the same. He doesn’t put you in the back of the bus. He just puts referendums on the ballot to end affirmative action where you can’t go to school. He doesn’t call you a racial name; he just marginalizes your existence. He doesn’t tell you that he’s set against you; he sets up institutional racism.

~ Al Sharpton

Saturday, October 6

1917 : FANNIE LOU HAMER BORN
1987 : OSCAR ARIAS SANCHEZ WINS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

I shall never accept that the law can be used to justify tragedy, to keep things as they are, to make us abandon our ideas of a different world. Law is the path of liberty and must, as such, open the way to progress for everyone.

~ Oscar Arias Sanchez

Sunday, October 7

1879 : JOE HILL BORN
1931 : DESMOND TUTU BORN
2001 : US BEGINS BOMBING AFGHANISTAN

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.

~ Desmond Tutu

Monday, October 8

Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men and women happy in the end but that it is essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears: would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell me the truth.

~ Feodor Dostoyevsky
Tuesday, October 9
1919: FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION FOUNDED

The first questions we need to ask ourselves are: In what ways do the feminist and ecological issues change our understanding of our own reality? Are they merely new topics to be reflected on and integrated into our traditional ways of thinking, or will dealing with them lead us to work at modifying the very models we use to think about the world?

~ Ivone Gebara

Wednesday, October 10

Justice requires that we be willing to risk the very ground beneath our feet. It demands that we not shy away from examining our most beloved teachings, assumptions, or traditions for failing, bias, and exclusion. It invites us toward emergence, allowing what is no longer needed to fall away, as newer and needed visions replace old ones.

~ Diann Neu

August 6, 2018. Betty Coleman reads from the list of names at the Names and Remembrance ceremony at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
In mid-June the light hangs on until I think the day will never end. At the table, alone, I place my left hand, palm up, before me and begin to count the little dry river beds on the map of life. One means I will live until I won’t, another means someone else, a third means children, a fourth the future’s past, and taken together they mean nothing at all. I lose the count and turn the hand over to find four blue streams with nowhere to go. In 1965 in late summer in the harbor of Barcelona as I went out to sea, I did not know all this hand could tell me. Overhead the sky darkened into a blue so deep I thought the world would break into fire. The evening wind swept from left to right across the bow, and the waves broke into blue, and in the deep trough of each wave ran a current of richer blue. At that moment I told myself I was not alone, I told myself the meaning of everything was held in a single drop of sea water the way all time crowded that moment. I understood how one human being was everyone. I must have said it aloud in English, for the mean next to me, a salesman from Argentina, turned to ask my meaning. The sea was blue and beautiful, was all I had the courage to in his language. He nodded slowly, and a dampened lock of white hair fell across his brow.

~ Philip Levine
Friday, October 12

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know what you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.

~ Maya Angelou

Saturday, October 13

1999 : US SENATE REJECTS COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

All my life I have been warned to be careful, and I have been, but I won’t let my work, God’s work, be stifled because of my fear.

~ Nola Fox

Sunday, October 14

There are no great things, only small things with great love.

~ Teresa of Calcutta

Monday, October 15

1969 : 2,000,000 PARTICIPATE IN MORATORIUM AGAINST VIETNAM WAR

Hospitality is the way we come out of ourselves. It is the way we turn a prejudiced world around one heart at a time.

~ Joan Chittister

Tuesday, October 16

1988 : UNITED STATES INVADES GRENADA
1998 : FORMER CHILEAN DICTATOR AUGUSTO PINOCHET ARRESTED IN LONDON

Compassion is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too.

~ Frederick Buechner

Wednesday, October 17

1991 : NATO CUTS NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARSENAL BY 80%

Our fulfillment is not in our isolated human grandeur, but in our intimacy with the larger Earth community, for this is also the larger dimension of our being.

~ Thomas Berry
Where was I going? you want to know. To sea. The way young men in stories go to sea? No. I worked for an American parts manufacturer with headquarters in Chicago, I was nearly thirty-eight with a wife and three kids back in California. I shared a state room on the good ship Kangaroo bound for Genoa, where I meant to flog bearings, drive shafts, and universal joints to merchants far shrewder than I. Actually none of this matters. When you were just nineteen you waited all summer in Havana for a man to offer you a job running guns into Bolivia, and that was how you made your fortune, found the meaning of life, and disappeared into cinema. Thus, it’s not you but I who must ask why the sea salt eats so many fires or how a drop of salt water contains each moment. It’s hopeless. No one else wonders how each of us became the other, no one else sits here asking his own left hand what it holds, while outside the mourning doves gather in the tall blond grass under a sky that quickens into blue and blue.

~ Philip Levine
Friday, October 19

1923: WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE FOUNDED
1720: JOHN WOOLMAN BORN

Be careful of your thoughts; they may become words at any moment.

~ Iara Gassen

Saturday, October 20

Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, “I will try again tomorrow.”

~ Mary Anne Radmacher

Sunday, October 21

1971: PABLO NERUDA WINS NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

If nothing saves us from death, at least love should save us from life.

~ Pablo Neruda

Monday, October 22

1962: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

Wisdom is not simply a dense scaffold of knowledge but an integration of feelings, community and reason all in harmony.

~ Christopher Eagan

Tuesday, October 23

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.

~ Nelson Mandela

Wednesday, October 24

UNITED NATIONS DAY COMMEMORATES FOUNDRING OF UN

We, the people of these United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war…

~ Preamble, Charter of the United Nations
The dead woman thrown down on the dusty road
is very beautiful.
One leg extended, the other flexed, foot pointed
towards the knee, the arm flung overhead, the hand
relaxed into a lovely gesture
a dancer might well study for years
and never attain.
Her purple robe is shaped
as if it’s fluttering;
her head is turned away.

There are other dead people scattered around
like trees blown over,
left in the wake of frightened men
battering their way to some huge purpose
they can’t now exactly remember,

But it’s this beautiful woman who holds me,
dancing there on the ground
with such perfection.

Oh dead beautiful woman, if anyone
had the power to wrench me through despair
and arid helplessness
into the heart of prayer,
it would be you—

Instead I’ll make for you
the only thing I can:
although I’ll never know your name,
I won’t ever forget you.
Look, on the dusty ground
under my hand, on this cheap grey paper,
I’m placing a small stone, here:

~ Margaret Atwood
Friday, October 26

2001 : US CONGRESS PASSES PATRIOT ACT

The anchor of all my dreams is the collective wisdom of humankind as a whole.

~ Nelson Mandela

Saturday, October 27

Without leaps of imagination or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.

~ Gloria Steinem

Sunday, October 28

Justice will not come to Athens until those who are not injured are as indignant as those who are.

~ Thucydides

Monday, October 29

1966 : NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN FOUNDED
1962 : CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS ENDS
1988 : SOUTH AFRICAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION REPORT RELEASED

If we have the courage and tenacity of our forebears, who stood firmly like a rock against the lash of slavery, we shall find a way to do for our day what they did for theirs.

~ Mary McLeod Bethune

Tuesday, October 30

1961 : USSR DETONATES 58-MEGATON ATMOSPHERIC TEST, LARGEST EVER

Three hundred years of humiliation, abuse, and deprivation cannot be expected to find voice in a whisper.

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Wednesday, October 31

1952 : US DETONATES FIRST HYDROGEN BOMB, ENIWETOK ATOLL, MARSHALL ISLANDS

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

~ Elie Wiesel
Thursday, November 1
Therese Anne Billeaud

1989 : DIANNA ORTIZ TORTURED IN GUATEMALA
1995 : SOUTH AFRICA HOLDS FIRST ELECTION FOR ALL RACES

White cotton T-shirt: an innocent garment then.
It made its way to us from the war, but we didn’t know that.
For us, it was the vestment of summer,
whiter than white, shining with whiteness
because it had been washed in blood, but we didn’t know that
and in the cropped sleeve, rolled up tightly
into a cuff, were tucked the cigarettes,
also white within their packet, also innocent,
as were white panties, white convertibles,
white-blond brush-cuts,
and the white, white teeth of the lilting smiles
of the young men.

Ignorance makes all things clear.
Our knowledge weighs us down.
We want it gone
so we can put on our white T-shirts
and drive once more through the early dawn
streets with the names we never could
pronounce, but it didn’t matter,
over the broken glass and bricks, passing
the wary impoverished faces,
the grins filled with blackening teeth,
the starving dogs and sick children
and the slackened bundles of clothing
that once held men,
enjoying the rush of morning air
on our clean, tanned skins
and the white, white flowers we hold out in our fists,
believing—still—that they are flowers of peace.

~ Margaret Atwood
Friday, November 2
1920: Eugene Debs, in prison, receives 1,000,000 votes for president

Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame. Just refuse to bear them.

~ William Faulkner

Saturday, November 3
1883: US Supreme Court designates Native Americans as aliens

If you choose to enter into other people’s suffering, or love others, you at least have to consent in some way to the possible consequences.

~ Ita Ford

Sunday, November 4
1992: Russia ratifies START treaty

People who make no noise are dangerous.

~ La Fontaine

Monday, November 5

What do you think is the greatest gift you’ll leave behind? Will you leave a legacy of children, financial gifts that will bless others, or works or ideas that will shape future generations?

~ Phillips Brooks

Tuesday, November 6

The ego will endure the worst agonies of neurotic misery rather than consent to one minute of diminishment of its sense of importance.

~ Helen Luke

Wednesday, November 7

Consensus serves to liberate each person from the constraints of individualism and allows them to enter into a process that unleashes the power of collective wisdom and imagination.

~ Mary Ellen Madden
The light sifts down from the naked bulb
he’s quickened with a string. He speaks
to no one out of the well of his anger.
He says, “I hate this,” and he stops.
He means more than this one-man shop
on Grand River where he stores the drive-
shafts, bearings, and U-joints swiped
from the Rockwell Arsenal. He means
the stalled traffic outside, the semis
basking and coughing, the gray floor
inside littered with crowded pallets
so filthy they seemed furred. He means
the single desk and chair, the hat rack
holding no hats, he even means the phone
he’s become so good at, for he’s learned
to give nothing away that matters and still
sound serious, to say, “No, we never
allow that much time,” and “Pretty good,
and you?” in a voice so deep even he
doesn’t know it. Wardie, everyone’s cousin,
still in his twenties, though the blue-
black double-breasted size forty-six he strains
against makes him look forty, the hard fat
of neck, upper chest, and shoulders draws
him down into the chair, and he swivels
abruptly toward those he can’t see. Go ahead,
reach out and stroke the dark stubble,
run a lone, cautious finger down the channels
for the tears he spills only in his sleep.
He won’t bite you. He’s Wardie, the lost
brother no one remembers, so give him
the love he can’t give himself. Feel him
shudder and draw back, not because he kept
his word and killed, not because your thought
became his act, but because it came to this.

~ Philip Levine

Edward Lieberman, entrepreneur,
four years after the burnings of Okinawa
Friday, November 9
1989: BERLIN WALL FALLS TO NONVIOLENT PROTESTS

Surround yourself with those who see the greatness within you, even when you don’t see it yourself.
~ Edmund Lee

Saturday, November 10
1938: KRISTALLNACHT

Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult spending our lives running from it.
~ Brené Brown

Sunday, November 11

Trust your own inner guidance. Have faith that your steps are carrying you toward your dreams.
~ Jonathan Lockwood Huie

Monday, November 12
1815: ELIZABETH CADDY STANTON BORN
1991: INDONESIAN TROOPS MASSACRE 150 NONVIOLENT ACTIVISTS IN EAST TIMOR
1993: UN VOTES 183-3 FOR END TO US BLOCKADE OF CUBA

Go and love someone exactly as they are. Then watch how quickly they transform into the greatest, truest version of themselves. When one feels seen and appreciated in their own essence, one is instantly empowered.
~ Wes Angelozzi

Tuesday, November 13

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire worlds all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world within our reach.
~ Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Wednesday, November 14

The challenge of climate change is so great because the battle is not with external enemies but a war within ourselves.
~ Emily Hunter
What is this about?
Wherever you are now there is earth somewhere beneath you waiting to take the little you leave. This morning I rose before dawn, dressed in the cold, washed my face, ran a comb through my hair and felt my skull underneath, unrelenting, soon the home of nothing. The wind that swirled the sand that day years ago had a name that will outlast mine by a thousand years, though made of air, which is what I too shall become, hopefully, air that says quietly in your ear, “I’m dust and memory, your two neighbors on this cold star.” That wind, the Levante will howl through the sockets of my skull to make a peculiar music. When you hear it, remember it’s me, singing, gone but here, warm still in the fire of your care.

~ Philip Levine
Friday, November 16

1989: Salvadoran death squad (trained in US at School of the Americas) murders six Jesuit priests, housekeeper and daughter in San Salvador

The time has come to resist the impulse to control, to command, to force, to oppress, and to begin quite humbly to follow the guidance of the larger community on which all life depends.

~ Thomas Berry

Saturday, November 17

Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy – the experiences that make us the most vulnerable.

~ Brené Brown

Sunday, November 18

1787: Sojourner Truth born

True change comes when ordinary people come together with others to share their experiences, their hunches, and even outrage, to unpack the truth.

~ Kathleen Desautels

Monday, November 19

1915: Labor organizer/歌手 Joe Hill executed in Utah

The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up the pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization might come. My theory is strong people don’t need strong leaders.

~ Ella Baker

Tuesday, November 20

Consensus requires a tremendous amount of surrender and trust, which means that a strong sense of relationship, and community is the linchpin of the model.

~ Mary Ellen Madden

Wednesday, November 21

We know that it does not take everyone on earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.

~ Clarissa Pinkola Estes
The beauty of the great predators amazes me,  
the music of their sleek haunch muscles rippling, 
the clear fierce gaze with the fire of hunger  
dancing golden in those slitting pupils,  
the way the hawk plays in the columns of air,  
the snow leopard balances leaps with her heavy  
tail among the rocks. I have made friends  
with a couple in captivity, as slow  
as the shadow of a tree moves across the grass.

The grace of the fast grazers dazzles me,  
the gazelle tossing her neck, streaking  
so her hooves seem to float over the ground,  
the stylish avant-garde striping of the zebra  
gorgeous and improbably, a parade except against  
their proper sun/shade pattern, vanishing  
into camouflage: the storm cloud glory of the horse,  
the antelope the color of velvet dust,  
the calm guilt-provoking gaze of ruminants.  

But I am neither. I honor my mothers,  
the scuttling mammals hustling through the brush,  
who gobbled through life, a little of this,  
a little of that, a lot of what others left,  
grasshoppers, a nice fat mouse, raspberries  
in season, rotten apples to get drunk on,  
roots we dug for, never efficiently. Not  
specialized to do anything particularly well  
except try to stay out of trouble and survive.  

Those middling animals, the small predators  
like the feral cat always chasing dinner  
and scrambling away from being eaten; the small  
grey fox who picks grapes on the high dunes  
and will steal a melon or a goose. Behold  
my ancestral portraits: shambling field  
apes smallish and chattering, with babies  
hanging on their backs picking over the fruit  
like my grandmother, my mother, and like me.  

~ Marge Piercy
Friday, November 23

Time is cluttered with the wreckage of broken communities which have surrendered to hatred and violence. For the salvation of our nation and the salvation of humankind, we must follow another way.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Saturday, November 24

Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.

~ Brené Brown

Sunday, November 25

When everyone was terrorized we didn’t stay at home crying—we went to the streets to confront them directly. We were mad, but it was the only way to stay sane.

~ Mothers of the Disappeared

Monday, November 26

1792 : SARAH GRIMKE BORN

Community cannot be seen as the thing we get to when everything has been won; instead it must be the daily praxis we honor as we struggle for the transformations our world needs. In this discipline we ensure that we are indeed creating new ways of being that reflect our deepest hope for radical change.

~ Erin Cox

Tuesday, November 27

Slavery never ended; it just evolved.

~ Bryan Stevenson

Wednesday, November 28

We have a duty to protect ourselves and others from our more destructive instincts.

~ Karen Armstrong
The shot bird topples from the air, 
the others note it: 
they need to know what’s going on. 
Tree leaves rustle, deer twitch their tails, rabbits 
swivel their ears. 
The grass-eaters crouch, the scavengers 
llick their teeth. 
Spilled life does not appal them. 

What alerts us? What are we feeding on? 
We take everything in, 
one wound after another. 
*Rubble, rubble,* say the guns. 
Our faces gleam in the glassy flicker, 
the night rises like smoke. 

Oh hide your eyes—
better to sit in a muffled room, 
doors locked, appliances unplugged, 
with nothing by the photo view 
of Niagara Falls you bought last summer— 
all that soothing water 
like warm green toffee flowing 
in slow motion over a cliff, 

trying not to see the weak swimmer, 
or the two children in their yellow boat. 

~ Margaret Atwood 
*Ten o-clock news*
August 6, 2018: After each name and reading during the Names and Remembrance ceremony, a crane is tied to the line across from the main entrance to the Y-12 nuclear bomb plant.

Friday, November 30
1835 : Mark Twain born

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

~ Mark Twain
Building peace lanterns is multigenerational at the Riverside Catholic Worker community—Alek and Don drill and Jim sands while Linda assists.

The August 9 Peace Lantern ceremony, commemorating the destruction of Nagasaki, Japan by a US atomic bomb drew dozens despite threatening weather. Jeff Brooks and Kathie Shiba led us in a litany of remembrance and hope.
Scenes from the August 4 gathering in Oak Ridge on the 73rd commemoration of Hiroshima Day. From top: Erik Johnson and Ken Jones gave an update on the Kings Bay Plowshares action and plans for a September walk; The Wolf confronts the weaponeers during a brilliant skit at Bis- sell Park; Gathering for the march to the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex—from North Carolina, Michigan, Tennessee, Florida and more!; On the way to Y12; The Yellow X banner hung on the fence at Y12.