Reflections FOR NONVIOLENT COMMUNITY

A BOOK OF READINGS

THE OAK RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL PEACE ALLIANCE

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2020
front cover:

It was a hastily called march by a teenager who said, on Facebook, that she had never done this before. Thousands came out in downtown Knoxville in June.

About this booklet

This booklet grows from an intentional exploration of nonviolent community embarked upon by members of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. It has since expanded to embrace many members of our peace community.

Our intention is to use the booklet 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 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 will 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.

Reflections for Nonviolent Community is also available on OREPA’s web site: www.orepa.org—with color pictures!

‡ contributions, suggestions, requests can be sent to OREPA, P O Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 or by e-mail to orep@earthlink.net
Saturday, August 1

In this country, American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.

~ Toni Morrison

Sunday, August 2

1924: JAMES BALDWIN BORN

I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.

~ James Baldwin

Monday, August 3

Tell them about how you’re never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there’s always that one little piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don’t speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside.

~ Audre Lorde

Tuesday, August 4

Revolution begins with the self, in the self...We’d better take the time to fashion revolutionary selves, revolutionary lives, revolutionary relationships. Mouth don’t win the war.

~ Toni Cade Bambara

Wednesday, August 5

1963: ATMOSPHERIC TEST BAN TREATY SIGNED

I feel that if we don’t take seriously the ways in which racism is embedded in structures of institutions, if we assume that there must be an identifiable racist who is the perpetrator, then we won’t ever succeed in eradicating racism.

~ Angela Davis
Thursday, August 6
Monroe Gilmour and Fern Martin

1945 : US DESTROYS HIROSHIMA, JAPAN WITH ATOMIC BOMB—140,000 KILLED
1998 : MINUTEMAN II PLOWSHARES ACTION
2005 : 1,500 ATTEND LARGEST PEACE DEMONSTRATION IN OAK RIDGE HISTORY

In the heart of the city, no one survived to report the coming of the light; the constrained witness of investigative groups must serve instead. A Yale Medical School pathologist working with a joint Japanese-American study after the war, Averill Liebow, observes:

Accompanying the flash of light was an instantaneous flash of heat. Its duration was probably less than one tenth of a second, and its intensity was sufficient to cause nearby flammable objects to burst into flame and to char poles as far as 4,000 feet away from the hypocenter. At 600-700 yards it was sufficient to chip and roughen granite. The heat also produced bubbling of tile to about 1,300 yards. It has been found by experiment that to produce this effect at temperature of 3,000°F acting for four seconds is necessary, but under these conditions the effect is deeper, which indicates that the temperature was higher and the duration less during the Hiroshima explosion.

“Because the heat in the flash comes in such a short time,” adds a Manhattan Project study, “there is no time for any cooling to take place, and the temperature of a person’s skin can be raised 120°F in the first millisecond at a distance of 2.3 miles.”

~ Richard Rhodes
The Making of the Atomic Bomb
Friday, August 7

The country is in deep trouble. We’ve forgotten that a rich life consists fundamentally of serving others, trying to leave the world a little better than you found it. We need the courage to question the powers that be, the courage to be impatient with evil and patient with people, the courage to fight for social justice. In many instances we will be stepping out on nothing, and just hoping to land on something. But that’s the struggle. To live is to wrestle with despair, yet never allow despair to have the last word.

~ Cornel West

Saturday, August 8

To accept one’s past—one’s history— is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, August 9

1945 : UNITED STATES DESTROYS NAGASAKI, JAPAN WITH ATOMIC BOMB
1974 : RICHARD NIXON RESIGNS PRESIDENCY OF UNITED STATES

What I think the political correctness debate is really about is the power to be able to define. The definers want the power to name. And the defined are not taking that power away from them.

~ Toni Morrison

Monday, August 10

The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.

~ Audre Lorde
Tuesday, August 11

The roots of sexism and homophobia are found in the same economic and political institutions that serve as the foundation of racism in this country and, more often than not, the same extremist circles that inflict violence on people of color are responsible for the eruptions of violence inspired by sexist and homophobic biases. Our political activism must clearly manifest our understanding of these connections.

~ Angela Davis

Wednesday, August 12

1953 : USSR EXPLODES FIRST THERMONUCLEAR BOMB

I’ve always found it instructive to think of the police and policing as this kind of avatar of American racism. The police are racism representatives. They are the folks we hire to actuate something that’s far more distant than a person’s individual biases.

~ Jamiles Lartey

Half a world away, in the midst of pandemic, a small group gathers outside the courtroom in Cochem, Germany, where three will go on trial for their trespass action at the Büchel Air Base, protesting the presence of US nuclear weapons deployed there.
The eruption of the expression of white supremacist ideology in what increasingly appears to be a determined attempt to roll back the very phenomenon of a black presidency is just one reason that the rise and fall of Reconstruction—and the surge of white supremacy in the former Confederate states following the end of the Civil War—are especially relevant subjects for Americans to reflect upon at this moment in the history of our democracy. In fact, I’d venture that few American historical periods are more relevant to understanding our contemporary racial politics than Reconstruction.

~ Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Friday, August 14
1846: Henry David Thoreau jailed for civil disobedience protesting US invasion of Mexico
1947: India independence won

No person is your friend who demands your silence or denies your right to grow.

~ Alice Walker

Saturday, August 15

Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the one who hated, and this was an immutable law.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, August 16

He licked his lips. “Well, if you want my opinion—“ “I don’t,” she said. “I have my own.”

~ Toni Morrison

Monday, August 17

Revolution is not a one time event.

~ Audre Lorde

Tuesday, August 18

Prison relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism.

~ Angela Davis

Wednesday, August 19

The patter of their feet as they walk through Jim Crow barriers to attend school is the thunder of the marching men of Joshua, and the world rocks beneath their feet.

~ Paul Robeson
It is difficult to imagine any act more revolutionary than the redistribution of land from the planters to the slaves in the former Confederacy. By the fall of 1865, Andrew Johnson, keenly aware of the fundamental transformation this would cause in the structure of the economy in the South and in the relations between black and white, reversed any plans for land redistribution. Only former slaves who had paid for their land were allowed to remain on it. Rumors of “forty acres and a mule” for all freed slaves proved unfounded. Still, African Americans continued to make land ownership a priority. As the freedman Bayley Wyat (also spelled Wyatt) put it succinctly in his “Freedman’s Speech,” delivered in 1866: “We has a right to the land where we are located. For why? I tell you. Our wives, our children, our husbands, has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locates upon; for that reason we have a divine right to the land.”

~ Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

*Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*
Friday, August 21
1831: Nat Turner Slave Rebellion
1968: Czechoslovakia Resists Soviet Invasion

What we get from police is consistent with what we as a society have internalized about black worth and about what constitutes order and justice.

~ Jamiles Lartey

Saturday, August 22

It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can ever have.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, August 23

Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.

~ Zora Neale Hurston

Monday, August 24
1980: Solidarity Founded, Gdansk, Poland

I am committed to the idea that one of the few things human beings have to offer is the richness of unconscious and conscious emotional responses to being alive.

~ Ntozake Shange

Tuesday, August 25

The answer to injustice is not to silence the critic but to end the injustice.

~ Paul Robeson

Wednesday, August 26
1920: 19th Amendment—Women Vote!—Ratified

I realize that if I wait until I am no longer afraid to act, write, speak, be, I’ll be sending messages on a Ouija board, cryptic complaints from the other side.

~ Audre Lorde
The court cases and acts of legislation that enshrined Jim Crow as the law of the land did not unfold in a vacuum. The larger context for them was the ideology of white supremacy, the set of beliefs and attitudes about the nature of black people that arose to justify their unprecedented economic exploitation in the transatlantic slave trade. Following the Civil War, this ideology evolved in order to maintain the country’s racial hierarchy in the face of emancipation and black citizenship. Anything but unmoored or isolated, white power was reinforced in this new era by the nation’s cultural, economic, educational, legal, and violently extralegal systems, including lynching. Among its root and branches were the paired mythology of white women’s rape and black men’s brutality, the convict-lease system, disenfranchisement, and the choking off of access to capital and property ownership. In many ways, this ideology still roams freely in our country today.

~ Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Friday, August 28
1963 : MARCH ON WASHINGTON; M L KING’S “I HAVE A DREAM” SPEECH

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.

Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy; now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice; now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Saturday, August 29
1949 : FIRST SOVIET ATOMIC BOMB DETONATED

You have to decide who you are and force the world to deal with you, not with its idea of you.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, August 30

I have known the joy and pain of friendship. I have served and been served. I have made some good enemies for which I am not a bit sorry. I have loved unselfishly, and I have fondled hatred with the red-hot tongs of Hell. That’s living.

~ Zora Neale Hurston

Monday, August 31

For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power I rediscovered. It is this real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world. Only within a patriarchal structure is maternity the only social power open to women.

~ Audre Lorde
Tuesday, September 1

Every artist, every scientist, must decide now where he or she stands. They have no alternative. There is no standing above the conflict on Olympian heights. There are no impartial observers. Through the destruction, in certain countries, of the greatest of our literary heritage, through the propagation of false ideas of racial and national superiority, the artist, the scientist, the writer is challenged. The struggle invades the formerly cloistered halls of our universities and others seats of learning. The battlefront is everywhere. There is no sheltered rear.

~ Paul Robeson

Wednesday, September 2

White supremacist ideology is based first and foremost on the degradation of black bodies in order to control them. One of the best ways to instill fear in people is to terrorize them. Yet this fear is best sustained by convincing them that their bodies are ugly, their intellect is inherently underdeveloped, their culture is less civilized, and their future warrants less concern than that of other peoples.

~ Cornel West
Black America needs a politics whose first mission isn’t the reinforcement of the idea of black America; and a discourse of race that isn’t centrally concerned with preserving the idea of race and racial unanimity. We need something we don’t yet have: a way of speaking about black poverty that doesn’t falsify the reality of black advancement; a way of speaking about black advancement that doesn’t distort the enduring realities of black poverty.

~ Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Friday, September 4

If the point is to get attention, then destruction works. If the point is to win hearts and minds and the political center, then it probably doesn’t. And if holding public officials hostage and forcing them to appease your demands is the point, it might depend on the public official.

~ Jamiles Lartey

Saturday, September 5

1981: Greenham Common Encampment Begins

Education is indoctrination if you’re white; subjugation if you’re black.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, September 6

1860: Jane Addams Born

There are years that ask questions and years that answer.

~ Zora Neale Hurston

Monday, September 7

I am a Black Feminist. I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my blackness as well as my womaness, and therefore my struggles on both of these fronts are inseparable.

~ Audre Lorde

Tuesday, September 8

The intolerance of the few, or the risk of it, carries the day against the wider humanity of the many.

~ Paul Robeson

Wednesday, September 9

It’s not that police don’t know how to do their jobs right, how to treat people with respect and dignity, how to protect them from assaults by other officers. They do it in white communities all the time.

~ Anonymous
In the end, it would turn out, just as Bishop Turner seemed to have forecast, that Black America did not need a New Negro; it needed the legal and political means to curtail the institutionalization of antiblack racism perpetuated against the Old Negro at every level in post-Reconstruction American society through an ideology gone rogue, the ideology of white supremacy. One can say that to thrive, the Old and New Negroes needed a New White Man.

~ Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Friday, September 11
1973: US overthrows Chile’s democratically elected Allende

Something that you’ll hear a lot—and I’ve heard a lot in the recent days—is, you know, that two wrongs don’t make a right, which is an ethical and spiritual intuition in many traditions. But it’s not a particularly American one. Our whole criminal justice system is based on the premise that two wrongs make a right. Caging humans and fining poor people money they don’t have are morally wrong, but it’s how we define justice in most cases in this country.

Jamiles Lartey

Saturday, September 12

People can’t, unhappily, invent their mooring posts, their lovers and their friends, any more than they can invent their parents. Life gives these and also takes them away, and the great difficulty is to say “Yes” to life.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, September 13

She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her.

~ Zora Neale Hurston

Monday, September 14

What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?

~ Audre Lorde
Tuesday, September 15
1963: Four girls die in bombing of Birmingham church

Choose your leaders with wisdom and forethought.
To be led by a coward is to be controlled by all that the coward fears.
To be led by a fool is to be led by the opportunists who control the fool.
To be led by a thief is to offer up your most precious treasures to be stolen.
To be led by a liar is to ask to be told lies.
To be led by a tyrant is to sell yourself and those you love into slavery.

~ Octavia Butler

Wednesday, September 16
1991: Philippine Senate outlaws US bases

Vast quantities of US bombers, tanks and guns have been sent against Ho Chi Minh and his freedom-fighters; and now we are told that soon it will be “advisable” to send American GIs into Indo-China in order that the tin, rubber and tungsten of Southeast Asia be kept by the “free world”—meaning white imperialism.

~ Paul Robeson

Knoxville, Tennessee has never seen the level of sustained public activism that has erupted in the aftermath of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. Several marches have brought thousands into the streets in a movement that shows no signs of abating.
Charting how white supremacy evolved during Reconstruction and Redemption is crucial to understanding in what forms it continues to manifest itself today.

Virtually all of the former Confederate states threw out their Reconstruction-era constitutions—those that black people helped draft and which they voted to ratify—and wrote new ones that included disenfranchisement provisions, antimiscegenation provisions, and separate-but-equal Jim Crow provisions. Though “race neutral” in language, these new constitutions solidified Southern states as governed by legal segregation and discrimination.

~ Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Friday, September 18

In our work and in our living, we must recognize that difference is a reason for celebration and growth, rather than a reason for destruction.

~ Audre Lorde

Saturday, September 19
1957: US Conducts First Underground Nuclear Test

People pay for what they do, and still more what they have allowed themselves to becomes. And they pay for it very simply; by the lives they lead.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, September 20

Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to jump at the sun. We might not land on the sun, but a least we would get off the ground.

~ Zora Neale Hurston

Monday, September 21
Autumnal Equinox

When I die, I will not be guilty of having left a generation of girls behind thinking that anyone can tend to their emotional health other than themselves.

~ Ntozake Shange

Tuesday, September 22

Whenever you conceptualize social justice struggles, you will always defeat your own purposes if you cannot imagine the people around whom you are struggling as equal partners.

~ Angela Davis

Wednesday, September 23

The way police treat black people in America is symptomatic of how America feels about black people, which is this state of conditional citizenship steeped in mistrust and in fear.

~ Jamiles Lartey
Police are very culturally conservative and see themselves as, in many cases, kind of soldiers in this culture war. And so that generates this kind of cyclical, cultural inertia where there is today an alpha, macho, military culture that surrounds policing. And that’s shaped who is interested in policing. So people who might be interested in some other version of policing don’t apply or leave departments when they get there. And so that culture becomes entrenched, and it becomes more attractive to those kind of alpha, macho folks.

~ Jamiles Lartey
Friday, September 25

Blind, closed, suspicious, afraid, ignorance protects itself,
And protected, ignorance grows.

~ Octavia Butler

Saturday, September 26

1888 : T. S. Eliot

The purpose of education...is to create in a person the ability
to look at the world for oneself, to make one's own decisions.

~ James Baldwin

Sunday, September 27

1990 : Last US Pershing II missiles removed from German soil

There is a price to pay for telling the truth. There is a greater
price to pay for living a lie.

~ Cornel West

Monday, September 28

Right now, to be born a girl is to be born threatened.

~ Ntozake Shange

Tuesday, September 29

We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own
needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence
for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will
choke us.

~ Audre Lorde

Wednesday, September 30

Part of the reason that the Amy Coopers of the world feel
so comfortable using the police as their own kind of personal
racism valet is because that's in line with how they've operated
in our society. We outsource the keeping of the racial order to
police every day. Officers themselves don't have to—and this is
so important—officers themselves do not have to be ideologically
white supremacists to be performing that function.

~ Jamiles Lartey
With deep sorrow we remember three dear friends lost this past month: Emancipators flutist Durant Thompson (top) at an OREPA action in Oak Ridge; Motoko Huthwaite (middle, at an action with Gordon Maham); and Kell, with pup in lap, chatting after lunch at the Peace Pagoda with Jim Toren. All three dearly loved and deeply missed.
Remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Thursday, August 6, 2019
Names and Remembrance Ceremony
6:00 - 9:00am
Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Saturday, August 8, 2019
NEVER AGAIN!
Rally, March Action for a nuclear free future
in solidarity with Hibakusha
10:30am
Alvin K. Bissell Park, Oak Ridge
11:30am
March to Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex

Saturday, August 8, 2019
Peace Lantern Ceremony
8:00pm
Sequoyah Park, Cherokee Blvd, west end
Knoxville, Tennessee

These events are tentatively scheduled; if pandemic conditions allow us to proceed safely, we will, taking all necessary precautions.
Other events may be scheduled in addition—check OREPA’s web site: www.orepa.org for updates.

Support the Ban Treaty