Re��ections
FOR NONVIOLENT COMMUNITY

A BOOK OF READINGS

THE OAK RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL PEACE ALLIANCE

DECEMBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021
This edition of Reflections marks twenty years since we began this project—the first edition was called “Building a nonviolent community: an exploration.” It grew from an intentional exploration of nonviolent community embarked upon by members of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance. We printed 18 copies. It has since expanded, by word of mouth, to include 300 members of our peace community. Some readings in this edition first appeared in the inaugural issue in January 2001 or in the first year.

Our intention is to use the booklet to build spiritual community. 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 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, no worries. Please continue to accept the reflection booklet and use it.

Each Thursday, in addition to the reflection, you will find the name of a person who is using this booklet like you are. 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

Readings contributed by Linda Ewald, Jim Ullrich, and Mary Dennis Lentsch.
Tuesday, December 1
1955: Rosa Parks refuses to give up seat on Montgomery bus
1969: US holds first military draft since WWII

There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist fighting for peace by nonviolent methods most easily succumbs—activism and overwork. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his or her work, because it kills the root and inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.

~ Thomas Merton

Wednesday, December 2
1942: First sustained atomic chain reaction, Chicago
1980: Three Maryknoll nuns and one lay worker murdered in El Salvador

When people say, “God bless America,” I say, “As opposed to what? God not bless Canada?” It makes no sense to me. This is not a high school football game. We don’t just root for our team. The challenges confronting us from here on out are global and need to be addressed in a global mindset. You can’t build a wall and say, “Desperation here, happy rich people there.”

~ Rick Steves
If there is going to be a miracle, it will be one that is propelled by courage, a determination to make good choices, selflessness, and love. These qualities, as always, are developed through relentless self-inspection, deep listening, and a fearless exploration of our inner lives. That work and those qualities are what give us the compass we need to make fair and wise decisions. And at this moment in history, we desperately need that compass, because you don’t go into a dark and unknown place without one.

~ H Emerson Blake
Friday, December 4
1969 : CHICAGO POLICE MURDER BLACK PANTHERS FRED HAMPTON AND MARK CLARKE

Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.

~ John Lewis

Saturday, December 5

You must have the courage to leave the table if respect is no longer being served.

~ Tene Edwards

Sunday, December 6
1865 : THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT TO US CONSTITUTION ENDS SLAVERY

The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

~ Frederick Douglass

Monday, December 7

Injustice motivates us to do something, to take risk, knowing that if we don’t, things will remain the same.

~ Digna Ochoa

Tuesday, December 8
ENLIGHTENMENT OF BUDDHA CELEBRATED
1886 : DIEGO RIVERA BORN

If you look deeply into the palm of your hand, you will see your parents and all generations of your ancestors. All of them are alive in this moment.

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Wednesday, December 9

We have to break with our mental categories, with all that can stand in the way of a real, profound solidarity with those who suffer, in the first place, from misery and injustice.

~ Gustavo Gutierrez
Nine nations still threaten to incinerate entire cities, to destroy life on earth, to make our beautiful world uninhabitable for future generations. The development of nuclear weapons signifies not a country’s elevation to greatness, but its descent to the darkest depths of depravity. These weapons are not a necessary evil; they are the ultimate evil.

On the seventh of July this year, I was overwhelmed with joy when a great majority of the world’s nations voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Having witnessed humanity at its worst, I witnessed, that day, humanity at its best. We hibakusha had been waiting for the ban for seventy-two years. Let this be the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons.

All responsible leaders will sign this treaty. And history will judge harshly those who reject it. No longer shall their abstract theories mask the genocidal reality of their practices. No longer shall “deterrence” be viewed as anything but a deterrent to disarmament. No longer shall we live under a mushroom cloud of fear.

To the officials of nuclear-armed nations, and to their accomplices under the so-called nuclear umbrella, I say this: Listen to our testimony. Heed our warning. And know that your actions are consequential. You are each an integral part of a system of violence that is endangering humankind. Let us all be alert to the banality of evil.

To every president and prime minister of every nation of the world, I beseech you: Join this treaty; forever eradicate the threat of nuclear annihilation.

When I was a 13-year-old girl, trapped in the smouldering rubble, I kept pushing. I kept moving toward the light. And I survived. Our light now is the ban treaty. To all in this hall and all listening around the world, I repeat those words that I heard called to me in the ruins of Hiroshima: “Don’t give up! Keep pushing! See the light? Crawl towards it.”

~ Setsuko Thurlow
Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech
Oslo, Norway, December 2017
Friday, December 11

It took me a hundred years to figure out I can’t change the world. I can only change Bessie. And, honey, that ain’t easy either.
~ Bessie Delany

Saturday, December 12
1870: Joseph Rainey first African American in House of Representatives
1958: Maurice McCrackin sentenced to six months in prison for war tax resistance

Nonviolence cannot be preached. It has to be practiced.
~ Gandhi

Sunday, December 13

In planning for peace, the inventions will arise from our deep longing, our imagination, our hopes, our common sense. We can start building a peaceful future by creating images in our minds.
~ Women’s Peace Presence

Monday, December 14

If I heard all the nuclear weapons were being dismantled, I’d do two-hundred cartwheels in a row.
~ Katy, age 9

Tuesday, December 15
1890: Sitting Bull, Sioux Chief, killed by US soldiers

There are things they tell us that are good to hear, but when they have accomplished their purpose, they will go home and will not try to fulfill our agreements with them.
~ Sitting Bull

Wednesday, December 16
1770: Beethoven born
1773: Boston Tea Party

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides, and gravity, we shall harness the energies of love. And then, for the second time in the history of the world, we will discover fire.
~ Teilhard de Chardin
It begins subtly:  
the maple  
withdraws an inch from the birch tree.

The porcupine  
wants nothing to do with the skink.

Fish unschool,  
sheep unflock to separately grace.

Clouds, meanwhile,  
declare to the sky  
they having nothing to do with the sky,  
which is not visible as they are,

nor knows the trick of turning  
into infant, tumbling pterodactyls.

The turtles and moonlight?  
Their long arrangement is over.

As for the humans.  
Let us not speak of the humans.  
Let us speak of their language.

The first person singular  
condemns the second person plural  
for betrayals neither has words left to name.

The fed consider the hungry  
and stay silent.

~ Jane Hirshfield
Friday, December 18
1946 : STEVEN BIKO BORN

The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

~ Steven Biko

Saturday, December 19

A nation that has chosen to produce an atomic cloud and live under a nuclear umbrella is in no position to complain that the sunshine of compassion and truth is not beaming through its society.

~ John Stoner

Sunday, December 20
1989 : US INVADES PANAMA

World peace starts right here. I will not raise my child to kill your child.

~ Barbara Choo

Monday, December 21

Why not go out on a limb? That’s where the fruit is.

~ Mark Twain

Tuesday, December 22
1993 : WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT VOTES SELF OUT OF EXISTENCE
1998 : US OKAYS PRODUCTION OF BOMB TRITIUM IN WATTS BAR REACTOR

The bread you do not use is the bread of the hungry. The money you have locked away is the money of the poor. The acts of charity you do not perform are injustices you commit.

~ St. Basil the Great

Wednesday, December 23

The bomb manifests an awful spiritual truth—the truth about the hell we create for ourselves when we cease to love.

~ Joanna Macy
Listen
with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water looking out in different directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you
looking up from tables we are saying thank you
in a culture up to its chin in shame
living in the stench it has chosen we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the back door
and the beatings on the stairs we are saying thank you
with the crooks in office with the rich and fashionable
unchanged we go on saying thank you

with the animals dying around us
our lost feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us like the earth
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
we are saying thank you and waving
dark though it is.

~ W. S. Merwyn
Friday, December 25
BIRTH OF JESUS OF NAZARETH CELEBRATED
1875: JESSIE WALLACE HUGHAN, WAR RESISTERS’ LEAGUE FOUNDER, BORN

Don Juan Chavarría: Not until that moment was there peace on earth—when the child was born. And that’s probably why there was joy in heaven. That’s what the angels are singing, it seems to me.

Edgard: The glory of God can’t exist in heaven until there is peace among people, which means justice, brotherhood, equality. Peace is all this. The rich often believe they give glory to God, but they don’t give peace and justice, and so they don’t give glory to God because the two things go together.

~ The Gospel in Solentiname

Saturday, December 26

I am the only person who ever looked at all twelve thousand five hundred of our targets. And when I got through, I was horrified. Deterrence was a formula for disaster. As a person who has lived in this arena, I have come to one conclusion. This has to end. This must stop. This must be our highest priority.

~ Gen. George Lee Butler, ret.

Sunday, December 27
1960: FRANCE DETONATES THIRD ATOMIC BOMB IN SAHARA DESERT

Struggles for the rights of poor people, for dignity, for human life, seem to be very, very dark tunnels, but one should always try, in that struggle, to find some light and some hope. I always try to look for the highest values that human beings could possibly have. We have to invent hope all over again.

~ Rigoberto Menchu

Monday, December 28

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of one’s dreams, and endeavors to live the life which one has imagined, one will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

~ Henry David Thoreau
Tuesday, December 29
1890: WOUNDED KNEE: US SOLDIERS MURDER 300 SIOUX WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN

If a country is governed wisely, people enjoy their food, take pleasure in being with their families, spend weekends working in their gardens, delight in the doings of the neighborhood.

~ Tao Te Ching

Wednesday, December 30

Sabbath requires surrender. If we only stop when we are finished with all our work, we will never stop. With every accomplishment there arises a new responsibility. If we refuse to rest until we are finished we will never rest until we die. Sabbath dissolves the artificial urgency of our days because it liberates us from the need to be finished.

~ Wayne Muller

How can a person face the existential threat of nuclear weapons day after day and not be consumed by despair? Ardeth Platte knew—laughing came easily to her. Here she is in morning circle in Germany in 2017 at the International Peace Camp with, from left, Kathy Boylan, Carmella Cole and Steve Baggarly.
In the mass graves, a woman’s hand, caged in the ribs of her child, a single stone in Spain beneath the olives, in Germany the silent windy fields, in the Soviet Union where the snow is scarred with wire, in Salvador where the blood will never soak into the ground, everywhere and always go after that which is lost. There is a cyclone fence between ourselves and the slaughter and behind it we hover in a calm protected world like netted fish, exactly like netted fish. It is either the beginning or the end of the world, and the choice is ourselves or nothing.

~ Carolyn Forché
Friday, January 1
1863 : ABRAHAM LINCOLN SIGNS EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Without justice and love, peace will always be the great illusion.

~ Dom Helder Camara

Saturday, January 2

A person cannot approach the divine by reaching beyond the human. To become human is what the individual person has been created for.

~ Martin Buber

Sunday, January 3
1993 : STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY 2 SIGNED

The greatest generation will be the generation that learns how to solve problems without war.

~ Lt. Col. James Megellas

Monday, January 4

We are like tenant farmers chopping down the fence around our house for fuel when we should be using nature’s inexhaustible sources of energy—sun, wind and tide.

~ Thomas Edison

Tuesday, January 5

There is no reason that the senseless temples of God should abound in riches and the living temples of the Holy Spirit starve for hunger.

~ St. Ethelwold

Wednesday, January 6
1878 : CARL SANDBURG BORN
1885 : A J MUSTE BORN

Anger is the most impotent of passions. It effects nothing it goes about, and hurts the one who is possessed by it more than the one against whom it is directed.

~ Carl Sandburg
Thursday, January 7
Anne Mary Lochner

1891 : ZORA NEALE HURSTON BORN

Where I come front
we rape the earth
in a dignified manner.
Gray suits plan it,
black suits vote for it,
tweed suits report on it,
and we celebrate it,
cutting the blue ribbon
to mark the time
and the place
where the crime will occur,
as if it were some great sacrifice to the gods,
and not the well-planned battering of God herself.

~ John Gill
Friday, January 8

The arms race can kill, though the weapons themselves may never be used. By their cost alone, armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve.

~ Vatican Statement to the United Nations, 1976

Saturday, January 9

What we are, what we do every day, has much to do with world peace.

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Sunday, January 10

Not one step, not one seed, not one action that is carried out in the spirit of nonviolence is ever lost. It bears fruit in the history of nations and of the world.

~ Hildegard Goss-Mayr

Monday, January 11

1912 : TEXTILE WORKERS IN LAWRENCE, MA LAUNCH BREAD AND ROSES STRIKE
1952 : FIRST BRITISH PROTEST AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

We need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can assure us of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.

~ Wallace Stegner

Tuesday, January 12

The future will be built with the courage we draw from creating the present.

~ Adolfo Perez Esquivel

Wednesday, January 13

Who is it that can make the muddy water clear? But if allowed to remain still, it will gradually become clear of itself.

~ The Tao Te Ching
Thursday, January 14
Sharon O’Hara-Bruce

1918: Emma Goldman sentenced to two years in prison for obstructing draft

Oscar, yuh surprise me
assin far a love poem.
Ah sing a song a love fa meh contry
small contry, big lite
hope fa de po’, big headache fa de rich.
Mo’ po’ dan rich in de worl
mo’ peeples love fa meh contry

Fa meh contry name Nicaragua
Fa meh peeples ah love dem all
Black, Miskito, Sumu, Rama, Mestizo.
So yuh see fa me, love poem complete
‘cause ah love you too.
Dat no mek me erase de moon
an de star fran de firmament.

Only somehow when ah remenba
how yuh bussin yo ass
to defend dis sunrise, an keep back
de night fran fallin,
ah know dat tomara we will have time
fa walk unda de moon an stars.
Dignify an free, sovereign
children a Sandino.

~ June Gloria Beer Thompson
Friday, January 15
1929: Martin Luther King, Jr. Born

Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his/her friendship and understanding.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Saturday, January 16
1991: George H.W. Bush begins first Gulf War

In every child who is born, no matter what circumstances and of no matter what parents, the potential of the human race is born again.

~ James Agee

Sunday, January 17
1961: Dwight Eisenhower’s farewell address warns against militarism

A society that lacks people of vision is a society certain of its end.

~ Leonardo Boff

Monday, January 18
2005: 500,000 March in Washington DC against Iraq, Afghanistan Wars

Sensitivity to the immense needs of humanity brings with it a spontaneous rejection of the arms race which is incompatible with our struggle against hunger, sickness, and under-development.

~ Pope John Paul II

Tuesday, January 19

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of humans as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger in the long run is not safer than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure of nothing.

~ Helen Keller

Wednesday, January 20

Until we have the courage to recognize cruelty for what it is—whether its victim is human or animal—we cannot expect things to be much better in this world. By every act that glorifies or even tolerates the killing of any living being, we set back the progress of humanity.

~ Rachel Carson
And now we will count to twelve
And we will all keep still
For once on the face of the earth
Let’s not speak in any language,
Let’s stop for one second,
And not move our arms so much.
It would be an exotic moment
Without rush, without engines,
We would all be together
In a sudden strangeness.
Fishermen in the cold sea
Would not harm whales
And the man gathering salt
Would look at his hurt hands.
Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
Victory with no survivors,
Would put on clean clothes
And walk about with their brothers
In the shade, doing nothing.
What I want should not be confused
With total inactivity.
(Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.)
If we were not so single-minded
About keeping our lives moving.
And for once could do nothing.
Perhaps a huge silence
Might interrupt this sadness
Of never understanding ourselves
And of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us
As when everything seems dead
And later proves to be alive.
Now I’ll count up to twelve,
And you keep quiet and I will go.

~ Pablo Neruda
Friday, January 22
1973: VIETNAM PEACE AGREEMENT SIGNED
2021: TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ENTERS INTO FORCE

Each state party undertakes never under any circumstances to: Develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.
~ Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Article I

Saturday, January 23

I have great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful things. I consider chaos a gift.
~ Septima Poinsette Clark

Sunday, January 24

Nonviolence extracts a high price from those who practice it. But once you are able to meet that demand, you can do most things.
~ Cesar Chavez

Monday, January 25
1851: SOJOURNER TRUTH ADDRESSES BLACK WOMEN’S RIGHTS CONVENTION, AKRON, OH
1914: GANDHI CAMPAIGN FOR INDIAN NATIONALS’ RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICA SUCCEEDS

There is no hope for the aching world except through the narrow and straight path of nonviolence.
~ Gandhi

Tuesday, January 26

We used to wonder where war lived, what it was that made war so vile. And now we know where it lives. It is inside ourselves.
~ Albert Camus

Wednesday, January 27
1951: FIRST US NUCLEAR TEST AT NEVADA TEST SITE
1973: VIETNAM WAR ENDS, US MILITARY DRAFT ENDS
1999: POPE JOHN PAUL II URGES OPPOSITION TO DEATH PENALTY

The way to heal society of its violence and lack of love is to replace the pyramid of domination with the circle of equality and respect.
~ Manitonquat
I am becoming
the woman I’ve wanted,
grey at the temples,
soft body, delighted,
cracked up by life
with a laugh that’s
known bitter
but, past it, got better.
knows she’s a survivor—
that whatever comes,
she can outlast it.
I am becoming a deep
weathered basket.

I am becoming the woman
I’ve longed for,
the motherly lover
with arms strong and tender,
the growing up daughter
who blushes surprises.

I am becoming full moons
and sunrises.

I find her becoming,
this woman I’ve wanted
who knows she’ll encompass,
who knows she’s sufficient,
knows where she is going
and travels with passion.
Who remembers she’s precious,
but knows she’s not scarce—
who knows she is plenty.

~ Jane Relaford Brown
Friday, January 29
1996 : FRANCE HALTS NUCLEAR TESTING

I’m not trying to counsel anyone to do anything really special except to dare to think and to dare to go with the truth and to dare to really love completely.

~ R. Buckminster Fuller

Saturday, January 30
1948 : GANDHI ASSASSINATED

We have to make truth and nonviolence not matters for mere individual practice, but practice for groups and communities and nations. That, at any rate, is my dream. I shall live and die trying to realize it.

~ Gandhi

Sunday, January 31
1797 : FRANZ SCHUBERT BORN
1915 : THOMAS MERTON BORN
1919 : JACKIE ROBINSON BORN

But we have only begun to love the earth.
We have only begun to imagine the fulness of life.
How could we tire of hope?—so much is in bud.
How can desire fail—we have only begun
to imagine justice and mercy, only begun to envision...

~ Denise Levertov
On September 30, 2020, Ardeth Platte’s life of activism came to a quiet close. We remember her as an inspiration, a friend, tireless in the struggle for a world free of nuclear weapons. In Germany in 2017, Ardeth and Carol joined others to oppose the deployment of US B61 bombs at the Büchel air base. Top: speaking to a large gathering on Sunday; middle: delivering the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to the base Commandant. Below: With Carol Gilbert and Susan Crane, greeting soldiers and workers as they arrive at the base in the morning.
At the bus stop at the Büchel air base in Germany, Ardeth catches up with Col. Ann Wright who was leaving as we arrived. Steve Baggarly eavesdro-- uh, looks on.

At the US Embassy in New York in 2015 as the Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference opens. With John LaForge and Carol Gilbert. Below left: And, of course, Carol and Ardeth in custody in NYC.

Above right: with Jackie Hudson, Carol Gilbert and Bonnie Urfer at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, TN in July 2010. Ardeth, on crutches, is ready to climb through the barbed wire fence behind her, trespassing at the bomb plant. Right: In custody, Ardeth flashes a peace sign to supporters as she is tucked into the squad car to be taken to jail.