



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom **WILPF Minnesota NEWS**

NEW ADDRESS!

WILPF-MN, c/o Zehra Keye, 1425 West 28th St., #320, Minneapolis, MN 55408

WINTER 2024

On Tyranny, Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century and How Fascism Works, the Politics of Us and Them

Book review by April Knutson

These two books are so timely now as we see extreme right candidates gaining seats in parliaments and even forming governments in Western Europe, South America, and Asia, and of course, our presidential election is less than a year away, with Trump ahead in most polls.

Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University, gives us twenty lessons to recognize and resist tyranny, drawing on the history of the victories of Hitler and Mussolini, as well as the Austrian people's acceptance of their annexation by Hitler's Germany. The first lesson is entitled "Don't obey in advance." And the last is entitled "Be as courageous as you can." In between we have lessons on what to be wary of and what to do to defeat tyranny. Snyder celebrates institutions, professional ethics, moral language, and truth. He also gives us ideas for resisting tyranny

in our communities: "Contribute to good causes." "Learn from peers in other countries." "Listen for dangerous words." This is a short book, only 126 pages, and you could read one lesson a day as an antidote to the news that brings us to despair.

"Contribute to good causes"

"Learn from peers in other countries"

"Listen for dangerous words"

Jason Stanley, professor of philosophy at Yale University, gives us a longer, more scholarly study of fascism, with an index and footnotes, documenting what he determines is the key to how fascism triumphs: separating people into "us and them." The fascist leaders celebrate the "true" people of a nation, those of the privileged skin color, culture, and religion of the great mythic past. Think "Make

America Great Again"!

Stanley's analysis is comprised of ten chapters examining how fascism separates people in different arenas, geographic areas, and workplaces. My favorite chapters include "Anti-intellectual," a study of attacks on U.S. universities; "Law and Order," a history of increasing incarceration in the U.S.; and "Sodom and Gomorrah," an analysis of the attacks on LGBTQ people in the U.S.

Stanley's book is focused on developments in the United States, but he also makes comparisons to recent far-right victories, policies and rhetoric in Europe, Turkey, and India. Recently, after this book was published, more Western European countries have seen significant gains of far-right parties in governments, including the Netherlands. They have been winning with anti-immigrant platforms—us vs. them.

"Yes, they just didn't waste their time, they wrote."

—Quote from *War and Peace* by Vasily Grossman in *Life and Fate* (trans. Russian)

by Regina Birchem

The Newsletter came together very quickly: five book reviews, a report from a delegation to Cuba, an essay on Apartheid, a Gaza poem.

Gaza is on our minds: One cannot go to Gaza and the West Bank, come home and forget about it. Lucia Wilkes Smith wrote in the recent WAMM newsletter of her memories of wounded children in Al-Ahil Hospital in 1988—35 years ago!

Military attacks by Israel on Gaza since 2008:

- 2008-9, lasted 23 days
- 2012 lasted 8 days
- 2014 lasted 51 days,
- 2021 lasted 11 days
- 2023 - 52 days and counting.

What about the trauma that follows those who survive—especially the children?

In March 2009 I was with a CodePink delegation to Gaza and in June to Israel and the West Bank. The unforgettable take away was learning the psychological impact on traumatized people, especially the children. The impact of this war will be felt for generations.

In this issue:

- Cuba: The US Embargo and Collective Punishment
- Apartheid
- Apartheid-Free Pledge
- Poem: Write My Name
- Book Reviews by April Knutson, Christyann Ranck, and Paula Staff
- Remembering Catherine Abbott
- Congress 2024 Announcement

Please note new mailing address.

Cuba: The US Embargo and Collective Punishment

by Lisa Valanti

Perhaps like me, you have learned more than you wanted about a 'crime against humanity' under international humanitarian law, known as 'Collective Punishment'. No one is spared the consequences of its intentional and universal suffering.

On November 2, 2023 the United Nations General Assembly voted 187-2 that US policy towards Cuba is a 'crime against humanity' because of its cruel and intentional 'collective punishment' upon an entire nation of people. For 31 years the UN has condemned US policy, and the US has flagrantly ignored its violation of international law to create so much suffering within Cuba that it would provoke a 'regime change' and the USA could restore Cuba as a 'client' state.

Cuba was 'gifted' to the US by Spain in 1898. As its first colony, the US ruled Cuba under the 'Monroe Doctrine' which basically continues to this day, to support US supremacy and hegemony throughout the Americas and the Caribbean.

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In 1959 the people of Cuba declared their independence from US colonial domination with a popular revolution and for the first time in over 500 years became a sovereign nation.

Since the moment the Cuban people won their independence, the US has used every weapon in its arsenal; invasions, assassinations, bombings, poison, biological weapons, sanctions, blockades to deny the Cuban people their fundamental human right to independence.

After 64 years of the longest, harshest sanctions ever placed against any nation, most people think Obama did some heavy lifting in restoring pathways for dialogue and diplomacy, but alas, Trump immediately undid everything Obama

did, and added over two hundred new restrictions, and without any justification, put Cuba on the 'State Sponsor of Terrorism' list days before leaving office. There are only four countries on that list: Iran, North Korea, Syria and Cuba. That Cuba doesn't qualify or meet any criteria doesn't seem to matter.

It 'legalizes' total US control of Cuba's economy.

That designation allows the USA to oversee EVERY financial transaction in the world towards Cuba, through the weaponization of AI (artificial intelligence) and algorithms thus stopping all imports and exports, food, humanitarian aid, medicine, fuel, to control everything needed to maintain civil society; its collective punishment is invisible to the public who has no idea these policies are in place. This starving Cuba into submission is creating profound suffering among its population and triggering a migration crisis.

Biden allowed this unwarranted designation to stand. He hopes the Cuban revolution will take its last breath on his watch.

We have to be better than this. We have to undo our colonial past and reimagine how nations can coexist without dominating them or extracting all their resources.

As for Cuba, call or write a letter letting Biden know he needs to remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Tell your elected representatives it's time to allow our first colony independence. Politicians represent us; they are not known for their courage or vision. It takes all of us calling for a change to make a difference.

Lisa Valanti, founder and Vice President of the Pittsburgh-Matanzas Sister Cities Partnership, has worked to normalize relations with Cuba since 1971.

LisaCubaSi@aol.com 412-303-1247

Healing: The Act of Radical Self Care

Dr. Joi Lewis, President of Healing Justice Foundation
St. Paul, Minnesota
<https://joiunlimited.com/>

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Apartheid

by Susu Jeffrey

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word meaning apartness, literally apart-hood. It is pronounced *apart-tate*. *Apart-tate* rhymes with hate. Apartheid is a word from the European colonial period when the Dutch East India Company established a trading post in 1652 in the Cape of Good Hope. Dutch settlers replaced local blacks with white-run farms worked by slaves from across the Dutch empire. The settlement was expanded to form the Dutch Cape Colony.

The Netherlands was a great sea power and blacks were trafficked like tobacco. But by 1806, with the British-Boer Wars, rulership of the colony changed to the British Empire. However the Cape Articles of Capitulation negotiated that previous Dutch legislation remain in effect despite the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, otherwise effective throughout the British Empire. Social inequality was increased in the 1890s with the discovery of diamonds and gold. The Union of South Africa was established in 1910.

World War II, while whites battled each

other, brought black workers into industrial centers where they demanded political rights and were labelled communists and terrorists.

Until 1994, laws upon laws were passed in South Africa to keep minority whites in power regarding race mixing, racial assignment (black, colored or white), legal residence, immigration, jobs, education, transportation, theaters, healthcare, cemeteries, etc. The scale of social engineering was so ubiquitous that it was mocked by the world rugby association.

Apartheid was ended in 1994 with a new constitution but in reality with the 1995 integrated South Africa Rugby World Cup win with Nelson Mandela's slogan, "One Team, One Country." *Apart-tate* is routinely mispronounced except by Democracy Now's Amy Goodman who is respectful about the correct pronunciation of people's names and international labels.

Apartheid in America

In a thumbnail version of American racism it took 97 years and three Supreme Court cases to legally outlaw racism in

America. In the Dred Scott case 1846-1857 Scott, whether free or slave, was found to have "no rights that white men were required to respect." The Fort Snelling slave from the then-free territory of Wisconsin therefore had no right to bring a case into federal court.

By 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson* the "separate but equal" theory was proclaimed. Separate *prima facie* cannot be equal. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954, five school cases from Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware and Washington D.C. were combined by the NAACP to successfully challenge the separate doctrine.

And we all paid lip service to equality among Native, black, brown and white people until George Floyd was murdered by armed authority on a May day in 2020. From Dred Scott to George Floyd, Minneapolis, Minnesota has led the apartheid headlines in the free world.

What about Israel?

Some people see the " Hamas-Israel War" as a land grab and genocide by Zionists against Palestinians. Others see Arab nations freezing-out Palestinian immigration.

Internationally, Israel is generally considered a client state of the United States. Is this the beginning of World War III?



What would a society be like if it were Apartheid-Free? What if all communities were without elements of exclusionary institutions, laws and practices, and had economies that work for all?

WILPF-US has endorsed the Pledge for Apartheid-Free Communities. <https://apartheid-free.org/pledge/>

THE PLEDGE FOR APARTHEID-FREE COMMUNITIES

We affirm our commitment to freedom, justice and equality for the Palestinian people and all people: and

- We oppose all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination and oppression; and
- We declare ourselves an apartheid-free community and to that end,
- We pledge to join others in working to end all support to Israel's apartheid regime, settler colonialism and military occupation.

WILPF AT COP28

Everything you need to know at:

<https://www.wilpf.org/wilpf-at-cop28-everything-you-need-to-know/>



BOOK REVIEWS: *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* *Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility*

by Rebecca Solnit, Thelma Young Lutunatabua and Others

Book Review by Paula Staff

Rebecca Solnit is a prolific author with many publications to her name. Her book, *Hope in the Dark*, released in 2018 by Haymarket Books challenges our anxiety and despair about climate change, which we cannot pretend does not exist. Originally an online publication that went viral and, eventually led to the book itself. Solnit, wrote, “It’s important to say what hope is not: it is not the belief that everything was, is, or will be fine. The evidence is all around us of tremendous suffering and tremendous destruction. The hope I’m interested in is about broad perspectives with specific possibilities, ones that invite or demand that we act. It’s also not a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse narrative. You could call it an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings.” (pp. xiii-xiv)

Her book is so rich with wisdom and suggestions that is hard to know where to begin and where to end.

Definitions of hope are plentiful, such as, “...and it recalls that power comes from the shadows and the margins, that our hope is in the dark around the edges, not the limelight of center stage. Our hope and often our power.” (p.xvi) She added, “Together we are very powerful, and we have a seldom-told, seldom-remembered history of victories and transformations that can give us confidence that yes, we can change the world because we have many times before. You row forward looking back, and telling this history is part of helping people navigate toward the future. We need a litany, rosary, a sutra, a mantra, a war chant of our victories. The past is set in daylight, and it can become a torch we can carry into the night that is the future.” (pp. xx-xxvi)

The temptation is to quote the entire book because it is so well-written and researched. For example, “To hope is to gamble. It’s to bet on the future, on your

desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty is better than gloom and safety. To hope is dangerous, and yet is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk.” (p. 4) It may be hard to miss that that quote is from the beginning of the book.

If you read what Solnit has written, you will be enlightened and encouraged to engage in whatever way you are willing and able to do so to turn our situation around from one of destruction to one of new creation. This book is readily available at local libraries and bookstores. I cannot urge readers more to find a copy and delve into it. You will not be disappointed. I will conclude the review of this slender volume with one last quote, “The question, then is not so much how to create the world as how to keep alive that moment of creation, how to realize that Coyote world in which creation never ends and people participate in the power of being creators, a world whose hopefulness lies in its unfinishedness, its openness to improvisation and participation. The revolutionary days I have been outlining are days in which hope is no longer fixed on the future: it becomes an electrifying force in the present.” (p. 95)

It is up to us to nurture and share our hope for change in a community that enlarges as the awareness of action increases for the benefit of our mutual future.

Not Too Late, also published by Haymarket Books, was released this year (2023). It is a challenge to unite the many contributors into a common voice. Some are more cogent than others. Solnit’s strength as an author is her comprehensive research and skillful writing. Not true of some of the contributors. That is not to say some writers are not excellent and readable. Again, climate change and justice is the theme—how to act on behalf of the planet and its diverse population of people, animals, plants and all else that exists here. Solnit leads the discussion of climate change and justice in the first chapter—Difficult Is Not

the Same as Impossible.

She wrote again about hope, “Hope is not optimism. Optimism assumes the best, and assumes its inevitability, which leads to passivity, as do the pessimism and cynicism that assume the worst. Hope, like love, means taking risks and being vulnerable to the effects of loss. It means recognizing the uncertainty of the future and making a commitment to try to participate in shaping it. It means facing difficulties and accepting uncertainty. To hope is to recognize that you can protect some of what you love even while grieving what you cannot—and to know that we must act without knowing the outcome of those actions.” (pp.5-6) She shared not only hope, but also facts to guide our decisions and actions regarding our participation in turning toward involvement and actions.

Mary Annise Hegler provided some guidance for us in determining our own involvement by quoting a climate scientist, Kate Marvel, “Climate change isn’t a cliff we fall off but a slope we slide down.” and added her own comments, “The climate has already changed. If you’re reading this, for all intents and purposes, you are doing so on a planet that is fundamentally different from the one you were born on. And what’s been done, sadly, cannot be undone by not letting it get worse. Limiting the damage is good, noble-valorous even. Any suffering we can alleviate is blessing.” (p.24)

It is up to you, the reader, to find your way through these writings. Ultimately, choosing what to keep and what to transform into your own. You will find the contributors that speak to you. Listen to the wisdom that leads to the discovery of what you will contribute to the solutions and actions that are congruent to climate justice. Please find your way to both of these publications to foster encouragement and belief in a viable future for all of us.



Write My Name

Some parents in Gaza write their children's names on them to help identify them should either they or the children be killed.

Write my name on my leg, Mama
Use the black permanent marker
with the ink that doesn't bleed
if it gets wet, the one that doesn't melt
if it's exposed to heat

Write my name on my leg, Mama
Make the lines thick and clear
Add your special flourishes
so I can take comfort in seeing
my mama's handwriting when I go to sleep

Write my name on my leg, Mama
and on the legs of my sisters and brothers
This way we will belong together
This way we will be known
as your children

Write my name on my leg, Mama
and please write your name
and Baba's name on your legs, too
so we will be remembered
as a family

Write my name on my leg, Mama
Don't add any numbers
like when I was born or the address of our home
I don't want the world to list me as a number
I have a name and I am not a number

Write my name on my leg, Mama
When the bomb hits our house
When the walls crush our skulls and bones
our legs will tell our story, how
there was nowhere for us to run

—Zeina Azzam, Palestinian writer, activist,
poet laureate Alexander, Virginia

BOOK REVIEW: *Peace*

Written by Miranda Paul and Baptiste Paul,
illustrated by Esteli Meza

Book Review by Christyann Ranck

Inspired by a childhood in war-torn Mozambique, *Peace* is a wonderful warm hugs book for parents to read to young children, for teachers in preschools, or for anyone learning to read.

The illustrations are like simple construction paper cutouts. The "Peace Tree" at the beginning has leaves with the word "Peace" in a multitude of the world's languages. That alone could spark conversation in any gathering of persons from differing cultures.

"Peace is a hello, a smile...Peace follows 'I'm sorry' and can let differences live...Peace is a choice that lets the smallest of us have a voice."

This book could be used in preschools, kindergartens, and first grade classrooms. Each child from a different culture could find their word for "peace" on the Peace Tree and build other trees with other words.



Remembering CATHERINE ABBOTT

by Christyann Ranck

Catherine (Kay) Abbott died at the age of 102. Kay was a long-time member of WILPF and WAMM. She was also co-founded ACLU and League of Women Voters chapters and participated in numerous other community activities. A memorial service was held on September 30, 2023, at 6566 France Avenue S in Minneapolis, her home for decades. Her daughter, Ellen, numerous friends and acquaintances spoke about her times spent with them.

Kay was President and board member of Middle East Peace Now and had a passion about the plight of Palestinians.

Kay was also passionate about trees and mushrooms. She was a voracious reader who became a librarian. She loved rocks and at the age of 93 traveled to Egypt to collect rock samples.

Besides taking Elderhostel Trips all over the United States, she went to China "as soon as Nixon opened it up" and to the Soviet Union, Syria, and Jordan.

She attended hundreds of classes at the University of Minnesota. Her daughter Ellen recalled that "There was always a pile of books next to the front door. We were required to take them with us and read. She believed in being involved and taking a stand on what she believed. Mom believed in immersing herself in the stream of history."





WILPF-Minnesota

c/o Zehra Keye
1425 West 28th Street, #320
Minneapolis, MN 55408

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