

Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale  
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## Religion and Ecology News Articles

July – August 2016

### July 2016

Thomas Berry- Great Work Continuing

Carbon Rangers/Ecozoic Times  
Vol. 9 No. 6

<http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=5dd06f3cbb86536df56de4a9d&id=d9c9902611&e=d41587f413>

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### July 2016

Green Churches Newsletter

<http://us13.campaign-archive2.com/?u=d9e8a3947f2f12635e017888f&id=2749c56cb9&e=f5c5dd627a>

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### July 2016

Voices for Earth Justice Newsletter

In this issue, you can read the following story:

FORE visits VEJ

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, co-directors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University ([fore.yale.edu](http://fore.yale.edu)) visited Hope House in June as their first stop on an environmental tour of Detroit. They were in Detroit to lead a two day workshop at St. Paul of the Cross Passionist Retreat and Conference Center in Detroit, and show their film "Journey of the Universe" at Mercy Center in Farmington. To see more photos from their visit, [click here](#).

<http://us11.campaign-archive1.com/?u=9eb850d03ad7bc11a3bb09576&id=8529215ea9&e=ac77c0dfea>

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July 5, 2016

Be kind to the environment for a greener Eid al Fitr

By Mohamed Abdel Raouf  
Albawaba Business

[Eid Al-Fitr](#) is an important religious holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting, and is celebrated by Muslims all over the world.

On this festive occasion, people usually buy new clothes, cook traditional food, greet and visit their families and neighbors, offer gifts and money to their younger relatives, go on picnics to public parks and beaches, arrange big parties and huge feasts, and so on.

Unfortunately, Eid celebrations these days are often extravagant and cause pollution and harm to the environment. For instance, the community spaces, including parks and other places, are always left with a lot of litter and tons of waste after the celebrations. Many people also buy a lot of new clothes that they really do not need.

A quick look at some of the recent Eid holidays in the region reveals some interesting facts: In Cairo Zoo alone, authorities lifted 50 tons of [garbage](#) after Eid Al-Fitr in 2015! In Amman, sanitation workers collected over 15,000 tons of household waste during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday in 2014, according to the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM).

So, Eid al-Fitr, in many ways, is becoming an occasion of [over-consumption](#) that creates pollution and waste problems. Now is the occasion therefore to seize the opportunity and adopt exemplary behavior in relation to the environment and hope that this responsible pro-environmental lifestyle will be observed during Eid and continue all year Islam advises balance and moderation in all matters.

Extravagance is the opposite of moderation and results in crossing the proper limits of consumption of resources. The Qur'an warns believers against extravagance in eating and drinking. Allah the Exalted says: "O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters.." (Qur'an, 7:31)

Thus, a true Muslim should do his best to celebrate and at the same time reduce his environmental footprint by consuming less, recycling, and avoiding overconsumption.

A Muslim must not be extravagant in consumption, whether of food, cloth or natural resources. As cited in the Quran: "Eat and drink of that which Allah has provided and do not act corruptly, making mischief on the earth." (Qur'an, 2:60)

The idea of "footprint" is already rooted in Islamic culture and values, and there are many examples and verses in the Qur'an and Sunnah that urge Muslims to reduce their footprint and ask them to live lightly on earth. The Qur'an describes believers of Allah as those who "walk on the Earth in humility." (Qur'an, 25:63)

Governments and local authorities also can play a key role in encouraging people toward environment-friendly behavior during Eid.

Among the ideas that can be implemented is to encourage the use of public transportation to reduce traffic pollution. The Dubai Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) introduced a plan to reduce traffic congestion and reduce pollution during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday in 2015

By offering 10 buses for free transit from the Dubai Mall to the Dubai World Trade Center.

In 2014, the Abu Dhabi Police warned the public against using or buying fireworks. According to Col. Humaid Saeed Al-Afreet, head of firearms and explosives, “Fireworks can potentially cause physical damage as well as environment pollution.”

Islam emphasizes a peaceful equal society. Extravagance goes against this principle of equality. If a Muslim wastes some resources by extravagance, he is directly wasting the right of others, of those who could have been satisfied by the wasted things, besides those of the future generation as well.

While planning for the upcoming Eid Al-Fitra celebrations, it is imperative that we think twice before buying food, clothing and other items in excess keeping in mind the need to protect the environment. As people go to community parks and other holiday destinations during Eid, we must strictly avoid throwing trash around. Let us strive to celebrate Eid in an eco-friendly way by shifting towards a greener lifestyle and striving to incorporate sustainable practices.

Wish you all an eco-friendly Eid Al-Fitr!

*The writer is the Sustainability Research Program Manager at the Gulf Research Center.*

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/be-kind-environment-greener-eid-al-fitr-859558>

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**July 6, 2016**

Church to faithful: Take Pope’s encyclical seriously

By William B. Depasupil  
Manila Times

The leader of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Antonio Tagle, has called on the faithful to take an encyclical of Pope Francis on the environment “seriously,” especially the call to “integral ecological conversion.”

“Let us take the bold step of reviewing and changing our lifestyles, our patterns of consumption, of spending,” said Tagle, president of Caritas Internationalis, adding that the Earth would only be a beautiful home if everybody takes responsibility for it.

The Pope came out with the Laudato Si last year, his second encyclical since assuming the papacy.

In it, he lamented environmental degradation and global warming because of irresponsible development.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Lopez vowed to follow the Laudato Si, particularly the issues of climate change adaptation and global warming

Also on top of her priority, she said, are protection and enhancement of marine and forest biodiversity and fight against irresponsible mining.

Meanwhile, advocacy group Save Philippine Seas Movement on Wednesday urged the government to demand payment from owners of a Panamanian-flagged bulk carrier that damaged 483 meters of coral reef after running aground at a world-famous diving site off Cebu last month.

SPS said the owners MV Belle Rose, registered under Alpha Ship Management Corp., should pay for the damage and the cost of rehabilitating the marine resource property even as appropriate charges are being readied against the ship owners.

The incident was similar to the 2013 Tubbataha Reef incident where the US government paid P87 million in fine for damage caused by grounding of the US Navy mine sweeper USS Guardian on 2,345,67 square meters of corals in Tubbataha Reef National Park, a Unesco-declared world heritage site.

In a statement, SPS co-founder and executive director Anna Oposa said an inter-agency task force formed by the Cebu provincial government is preparing the case, particularly assessment of the damage to the Monad shoal, widely known as a popular tourist destination and scuba diving haven.

The MV Belle Rose ran aground in Monad Shoal about 4 nautical miles southeast off Malapascua Island at 3 a.m. on June 13 en route to San Fernando port in Naga, Cebu, from Japan.

It was reportedly loaded with some 48,000 tons of clinker, reportedly for use in cement production of Taiheiyo Cement in Naga City.

Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) chief Baltazar Tribunalo Jr. said marine biologists from the University of San Carlos and non-government organizations were also helping in the investigation to determine the extent of damage to the corals and other marine life in the area.

Tribunalo pointed out that before the vessel can be salvaged, there has to be a risk assessment.

He said they will thoroughly go over the province's environmental laws to determine the sanctions that will be imposed.

Monad Shoal, a protected marine area, is regarded as the number one diving spot in Malapascua Island.

It is popular among tourists because thresher sharks use the site as a feeding ground and cleaning station.

<http://www.manilatimes.net/church-to-faithful-take-popes-encyclical-seriously/272127/>

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**July 7, 2016**

Illegal gold mining causing mercury contamination in indigenous groups

By Carolina Torres  
Mongabay

Research finds high, unsafe levels of mercury contamination in Brazil's Yanomami and Ye'kuana peoples, almost certainly due to illegal gold mining on indigenous lands in the Amazon.

- Conflict between gold miners and indigenous people in Brazil is common, with 134 Indians killed in 2015 in mining-related disputes. Mercury contamination of Amazon rivers is a less visible, but no less serious threat to the lives of Brazilian Indians.
- A recent study looked at mercury contamination in the Yanomami and Ye'kuana peoples in northern Roraima — Brazil's least populated state and part of the Amazon. The researchers found dangerous levels of mercury in the bodies of those living closest to illegal gold mining operations.
- More than 92 percent of Yanomami Indians tested in Aracaçá (the closest community to illegal mining sites) had unsafe rates of mercury in their bodies, while in the Papiú region (located farthest from illegal mining sites), just 6 percent were mercury contaminated. Researchers conclude that the variation in rates is due to the amount of exposure the various indigenous groups have had to illegal mining.

The Brazilian Amazon has a long history of conflict between illegal gold miners and indigenous people, which has often resulted in extreme violence against remote tribes. 2015 saw a dramatic uptick in such attacks, with 134 indigenous people killed, according to CIMI an agency that has been gathering data on Brazilian indigenous groups for fifty years.

But illegal gold mining has another less visible, no less dangerous impact on indigenous people: mercury poisoning — resulting when the toxic substance is used to process the precious metal. Mercury released into the environment then travels up the food chain.

A recent study conducted by the [Oswaldo Cruz Foundation](#) in partnership with the [Instituto Socioambiental](#) (ISA) and the Getulio Vargas Foundation, looked at mercury contamination in

the Yanomami people in northern Roraima — Brazil's least populated state and part of the Amazon.

The researchers found that mercury contamination has hit the Yanomami and Ye'kuana peoples hard, with high percentages of those studied living near illegal mining operations possessing unsafe levels of mercury in their bodies. Mercury contamination can cause neurological and motor problems, vision loss, and other serious health conditions, along with permanent fetal harm.

Researchers analyzed hair samples that were provided voluntarily by 239 Indians living in the Papiú region, and in the communities of Waikás and Aracaçá, two areas where illegal gold miners are reportedly active. Among those examined were the most vulnerable: children, women of childbearing age, and people who had come into direct contact with illegal gold mining operations.

The Yanomami community of Aracaçá, which is the closest to illegal mining sites, had the most alarming rates. Researchers studied 13 people there, of whom 92 percent were contaminated with unsafe levels of mercury.

In the Ye'kuana community of Waikás, scientists found that of 47 samples taken, 27 percent showed unsafe levels of mercury. The Papiú region, where gold miners are rare, had the lowest rates: out of 179 indigenous people surveyed, just 6 percent were contaminated with mercury.

“We conclude that the difference [in rates] is caused by the level of exposure and interactions with the regions of mining,” said Claudia Vega, an ISA researcher. Indigenous people “ingest mercury, in most cases [by] eating contaminated fish, and the substance passes into the body. The contamination affects the entire nervous system — especially the central [nervous system].”

Mercury, a highly toxic metal, is widely used in the illegal exploration for gold. The toxic liquid metal is mixed with gravel, soil and sediment dredged from river bottoms and steep streamside hills, where it then binds to the gold, forming an alloy which is easy to identify and separate from the waste material. The alloy is then heated and the mercury evaporates, leaving gold nuggets. The vaporized mercury then condenses back into its solid form, falling to earth and washing into streams.

Unfortunately for the environment and for indigenous people, the mercury then enters the food chain, traveling from the mine, to fish and to fish-eating animals, including humans — especially impacting indigenous people for whom fish are an important staple.

The research on mercury contamination in the Amazon began in November 2014 after talks between indigenous leaders and ISA coordinator Marcos Wesley de Oliveira concerning the presence of gold explorers on indigenous lands.

“The presence of miners near the communities raised concerns about the health of indigenous people. We made collections of hair strands and fish, so that the analysis could be done. [T]he results were presented to the Indians and [were] sent to the relevant [government] bodies”, said

Oliveira, in a G1 news service interview. The research done in the communities was requested by, and had the support of the Hutukara Yanomami Association and Yanomami People's Association in Brazil (APyB). All hair samples tested were respectfully returned to the people involved in the research.

Indigenous leader Reinaldo Rocha Ye'kuana also offered a comment in the G1 interview: "We were concerned about the research result. [Mercury] contamination affects plants, animals and can also affect our future generation[s]". He announced plans for a mercury awareness campaign in the communities.

In March 2016, a committee of Yanomami and Ye'kwana leaders presented the scientific findings to Funai, Brazil's indigenous authority, and to Ibama, the federal environmental agency; as well as to the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the Special Rapporteur on UN Indigenous Rights.

The invasion of Yanomami lands by gold miners has long been a serious problem. But that threat has worsened lately. An estimated [5,000 illegal miners](#) are currently working in the Yanomami territories. The Yanomami and Ye'kwana have called for the immediate removal of miners from their lands, along with emergency and long term care for the people impacted by mercury poisoning.

An estimated 200 tons of mercury are released into the environment due to gold mining in Latin America annually according to studies released by The World Bank, leading not only to serious human health consequences, but to land and stream contamination, and to the poisoning of plants and animals.

In one case at the start of 2016, an indigenous child died in the Peruvian Amazon after showing symptoms associated with mercury poisoning. Illegal miners there are having a major impact on human populations and ecosystems. A recent study revealed that around 80 percent of the Nahua tribe in Peru is currently suffering from mercury poisoning.

Of course, mercury contamination isn't the only serious environmental problem associated with mining. The recent [failure of a Samarco company iron mine tailings dam](#) in Minas Gerais state resulted in what is likely Brazil's biggest environmental disaster ever — pouring 50 million tons of iron ore and toxic waste into the Rio Doce, killing 19 people and poisoning the river along its entire 853 kilometer (530 mile) length, and impacting more than a million people.

Diamond mines are the problem on the Roosevelt Indigenous Lands — Sierra Morena, Aripuanã Park and Aripuanã — located between the Brazilian states of Rondônia and Mato Grosso. Illegal miners began being attracted there between 1999 and 2000. The region is now known to contain one of the five largest diamond deposits in the world.

According to a local prosecutor, Reginaldo Trindade, conflicts between the tribes and diamond miners over recent years have led to violence, corruption and a true "cultural and social genocide. It's an [indigenous] community on the brink of extinction, if not physically, at least ethnically and culturally".

<https://news.mongabay.com/2016/07/illegal-gold-mining-causing-mercury-contamination-in-indigenous-groups/>

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**July 10, 2016**

Buddhist monks buy 600lbs of lobster to release them back into the ocean

The monks, who live on the Canadian **fishing** island, said the purpose of the mission was to 'cultivate compassion' for all human beings

By Rachael Pells  
Independent

More than 600 pounds (272kg) of lobsters have been spared the pot thanks to a liberation project arranged by a group of Buddhist monks in Canada.

The monks, from the Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society, bought the lobsters from various sources around Prince Edward Island in Eastern Canada, before taking them out to **sea**.

Taking the lobsters on board a **fishing** boat, the monks released them back into the ocean off the coast of Wood Islands, a small fishing community on the south of Prince Edward Island.

Venerable Dan, a spokesman for the monks involved, said the purpose of the mission was to “cultivate compassion”, not just for the lobsters, but for all human beings.

Speaking to CBA news before the crustaceans were released, he said he hoped the group would “find a spot where there are no cages waiting for them”.

“We respect everyone's dietary choice, so we're not doing this to convert everybody to be vegetarians or vegans,” he said.

“This whole purpose for us is to cultivate this compassion toward others. It doesn't have to be lobsters, it can be worms, flies, any animals, drive slower so we don't **run** over little critters on the street.”

The Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society has lived on Prince Edward Island for the past eight years. Hundreds of monks travel to the island from Asia each year to study Buddhism in their monastery all year round.

Before releasing the lobsters, the monks held a 20-minute ceremony with a prayer and **chant** to the Buddha of compassion.

According to the group, islanders — including fisherman — have supported the cause, even helping to find the monks a better place to release the animals so they wouldn't be captured again.



“If your loved ones were in this situation, what would they like you to do?” said Venerable Dan. “To give them a helping hand and put them back to where they feel comfortable and we believe if everybody's able to do that, it will become a better place, a more harmonic place.”

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/buddhist-monks-buy-600lbs-of-lobster-to-release-them-back-into-the-ocean-a7129696.html>

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**July 11, 2016**

Here's A Look At How Catholic Churches Are Taking Pope Francis' Climate Encyclical To Heart

By Sydney Pereira  
Think Progress

It's been over a year since Pope Francis released his climate encyclical, *Laudato Si*, which recognized the dangers of human-caused climate change and the moral imperative to address it. Since then, Catholic leaders have been adapting their churches to speak out and take action on climate change. The Catholic Church has a [history](#) of recognizing environmental problems, but the encyclical last year has sparked more efforts to make changes.

In January 2015, before the Pope's climate encyclical, Catholics were already mobilizing for action on climate change when the Global Catholic Climate Movement was founded. The Movement [announced](#) the certainty that “anthropogenic [human-made] climate change endangers God's creation and us all, particularly the poor, whose voices have already spoken of the impacts of an altered climate.”

Late last year, researchers from Yale University and George Mason University [found](#) that 19 percent of American Catholics were “much more concerned about global warming” because of the Pope's position on the subject. Another 34 percent were moderately more concerned. Researchers called this “The Francis Effect.”

Here are some of the actions Catholics are taking against climate change in their churches around the world.

### *Australian Catholic Organizations Divest, Catholic Schools Go Solar*

[Four organizations](#) publicly divested from coal, oil, and gas extraction industries on the June anniversary of *Laudato Si*. The organizations that divested are Presentation Congregation Queensland; Presentation Sisters Wagga Wagga; Marist Sisters Australia, and The Passionists—Holy Spirit Province. The announcement was facilitated by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, which also released an [open letter](#) from several religious leaders urging those in public office to act on climate change in the wake of the Great Barrier Reef's [coral bleaching](#).

“The decisions are made after much careful consideration and in the knowledge that our decision won’t change things overnight—this is a long term investment in the earth’s future,” said Sister Anne Lane, leader of the Presentation Sisters Wagga Wagga, in a statement.

The organizations are joining a growing divestment movement. [Twenty-seven percent](#) of groups that are divesting are religious in nature.

### *Solar Installations Across the U.S.*

The [Diocese of Camden](#), located in New Jersey, is seeking solar installations in schools, parishes, and cemeteries. The initiative has been in the works for three years, but has faced delays through the process of obtaining contractors, utility approvals, and local permits.

Across the country north of San Diego, St. Michael’s Parish has already invested \$1.3 million in a solar panel system. A year after the installations, the church is reaping the benefits of going solar. Electricity costs fell to \$5,000 a month from around \$20,000.

The Pope’s message helped inspire Bishop Robert W. McElroy’s recommendation [last December](#) that every parish in the Diocese of San Diego adopt solar-power systems.

“It strikes me this is one area where we can really help the environment, and at the same time it is sound practice economically,” McElroy said to the San Diego Union-Tribune.

He did not issue an order, but around 20 parishes at the time had already switched to solar power.

### *Catholic Schools Go Solar*

In Queensland, Australia, 31 Catholic schools have switched to solar power. The pilot project has resulted in 250,000 dollars of electricity savings per year. The Vatican has responded, asking for Catholic schools around the world to make the switch to solar.

According to Martin Oldfield, company director for Eco Community, which designed the project, the savings Catholic schools could see from lowering their electricity bills in the long term would “mean that money now spent on power bills can be put back into teaching,” reported [Catholic Leader](#).

In San Diego, a Catholic high school plans to finish installing a [1.1 megawatt solar carport system](#) by this fall. The company that the school partnered with, Baker Electric Solar, says the school will save 80,000 to 100,000 dollars per year on its electricity costs.

Another California Catholic school installed [105 solar panels](#) donated by SilRay, a company providing commercial solar solutions to small and midsize businesses. Electricity costs are expected to decrease by 6,600 dollars. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony in May, over 200 students attended.

### *Virginia Catholics Support Legislation On Coastal Protection*

[Last August](#), the Virginia Catholic Conference recognized the local threat of climate change in Norfolk, where the rising sea levels are having a direct effect in parts of the city prone to flooding. Richmond Bishop Francis DiLorenzo addressed over 200 people saying “the Church is not in conflict with science,” at the event in Norfolk.

Local Catholic leaders [advocated](#) soon afterward for the Coastal Protection and Resiliency Act to fund coastal resiliency and flooding mitigation projects. The bill did not pass, but the policy efforts recognizing climate change made by Catholic leaders is partly inspired from the Pope’s encyclical last year.

### *Thailand Parish Plants 800 Trees For Anniversary*

[On June 5](#), a parish in Thailand planted hundreds of trees for a reforestation program in honor of the anniversary of the Pope’s climate encyclical. The parish’s priest told Catholic News Agency that the Pope had “opened a new dimension on the issues and brought a broader perspective, engaging the question with the eyes of spirituality and faith.”

This year’s Earth Day theme was ‘[Trees for the Earth](#).’ Catholics highlighted the importance of tree planting and [joined](#) the goal to plant 7.8 billion trees in the next five years. Forests can act as carbon sinks by absorbing carbon dioxide and aid in mitigating climate change.

### *Archdiocese of Atlanta Launches Action Plan*

Atlanta’s climate [plan](#) was launched last November in response to the encyclical. Created in coordination with University of Georgia, it highlights what local churches can change to be more environmentally friendly. A church’s options are ranked easy, moderate, or advanced—such as bringing in speakers from environmental fields, upgrading plumbing systems, buying local food, planting trees, composting, providing electric cars to pastors, or installing electric car charging stations.

While there is still much work to be done to mitigate and adapt to climate change, local churches like these are recognizing human-caused climate change and local churches are developing plans to answer the Pope’s call to action.

### *Restoration of St. Patrick’s Cathedral Includes Geothermal Energy System*

New York City’s [St. Patrick’s Cathedral](#) has been in the restoration process since 2012, and the restoration included a geothermal energy system.

Spain’s Cathedral of Palma de Mallorca completed its switch to 100 percent renewable energy through a energy management system certified by the company AENOR. The cathedral dates back to the 13th century, but its energy technology is in line with the future. Its management said “the Consolidated Energy Management Policy is in line with the concern for environmental

problems and consequences of climate change recently expressed by Pope Francis I in his encyclical,” reported [Energy News](#).

### *Philippines Archdiocese Led 10,000 People In A March Against Fossil Fuels*

In a two week long global initiative called ‘Break Free from Fossil Fuels’ this May, Catholics teamed up with other environmental groups around the world for demonstrations aiming to disrupt operations at power plants, pipelines, and coal mines.

In the Philippines, Archbishop Ramon Arguelles of the Lipa led 10,000 people in a march to a local sporting complex, reported [National Catholic Reporter](#). Mass was held at the end of the march where Arguelles and other religious leaders called for an end to the reliance on coal. The march was directly aimed at halting a 600-megawatt coal plant proposed to be built in Batangas City.

### *Catholics Petition For Climate Action Ahead Of Paris Talks*

Before the Pope’s climate encyclical was released, Catholic groups called on global leaders to take climate action. The Global Catholic Climate Movement launched a [petition](#) which stated the following:

“Climate change affects everyone, but especially the poor and most vulnerable people among us. Inspired by Pope Francis and the Laudato Si’ encyclical, we call on you to drastically cut carbon emissions to keep the global temperature rise below the dangerous 1.5°C threshold, and to aid the world’s poorest in coping with climate change impacts.”

The Pope [endorsed](#) the petition and 900,000 signatures were delivered to President Hollande at the climate talks in Paris late last year.

In [April](#), faith leaders of several different religious groups signed the [Interfaith Statement on Climate Change](#), which demanded that nations ratify the Paris Agreement.

<https://thinkprogress.org/heres-a-look-at-how-catholic-churches-are-taking-pope-francis-climate-encyclical-to-heart-fafd2d1b0ca5#.25ugu0sjy>

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## **July 11, 2016**

Biblical animal prophecy reveals ecology is all about peace

By Donna Schaper  
National Catholic Reporter

The prophet Isaiah spoke about the promise of universal peace in this way:

“Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair. They shall not harm or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea.” (Isaiah: 11:6-9)

Wolves and lambs, cows and bears, lions and kids and vipers, oh my!

A human child plays near a snake and offers a paw into the adder’s den? You’d think the Bible’s peaceful forecasts were written after showing up at a contemporary environmental conference. Those conferences today often start in a heavy-duty theological quarrel about Lynn White’s prophetic 1967 essay, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” that often ends with a dismissal of his point of view.

To refresh: White argued that we thought we were superior to nature and better than animals. He accurately read the dominion texts in Genesis 1. Anthropocentric reigned as his critique of Western theology. Sallie McFague and other theologians argue that White failed to let the Yahwist dominion account of creation quarrel with the priestly version. In Genesis 2:15, God took “man” and put him in the Garden of Eden to fill and keep it, not to dominate it.

Now, you may want to scoff at these quarrels between biblical hermeneutics and long-dead essayists -- but don’t. Dominion is what animals give up on their way to peace. This wild and crazy biblical text about animals getting along, rather than fighting, is paired nicely with the Genesis quarrels. Like a good wine with a good dinner, they go together.

Many think that ecology is all about nature when it is rather about peace. The metaphorical wolves and lambs of society have long fought over the water and the oil. The animals choose another way in the prophecy of just how different things are going to be. When tend and befriend replace dominion, wild and crazy things result.

“Revelation comes to those who are radically hospitable to what they don’t know,” said Rebecca Parker, a Unitarian Universalist theologian, in a 2008 sermon.

Parker is right. Earthlings will be saved by our animal curiosity about each other. Whenever we imagine we are better than animals, we are choosing against them and their miracle ways. We are refusing to imagine peace.

Peace comes when we move beyond one of our natures, that of fight and flight, into another of our natures, that of tend and befriend. Peace comes when we move out of one of the stories we tell ourselves -- that we are here to have dominion -- and move into another story: that we are here to fill and keep, tend and befriend the earth. Lions and lambs are meant for each other. We actually belong one animal to another.

Environmentalists have long been on the road to becoming ecologists. Environmentalists often stop too long at the station of dominion, where we must save the earth in order to save

ourselves. We are actually anthropocentric in this way, imagining ourselves the center of our world. Ecologists, on the other hand, take the argument beyond anthropomorphism. We go to further stops along the way: We save the earth in order to save the earth and not just to save ourselves, but also the porcupines.

Another important idea can use a little dusting off, too. Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's view of "I/Thou" is rightfully famous. We are to treat each other as subjects. We are not to treat each other as objects. We are to treat each other as holy, not as ordinary.

H. Paul Santmire, an eco-theologian in the Evangelical Lutheran church, has developed an important quarrel with Buber. Like the theme animals of our prophecy, quarrels need not be antagonistic. Lions and lambs can lie together. One argument can safely sit alongside another without biting it. We can admire Buber's I/Thou and keep it in our core. And we can also add to it.

Santmire recommends an ecological approach, one that gets us out of that place where we don't belong, that place of domination. There we act as though animals and plants exist to feed us. We imagine human relationships as way too important. His alternative calls for an I-Ens or I-it relationship, in which we place ourselves as part of the whole.

From domination, it is a small step to get to rich people and poor people. In that view, rich people deserve more than poor people. Rich people are not only better than animals, they are better than other people. Humans are alphas, never betas. Animals are rarely considered our neighbors and more often understood as property, food and labor, or generally, as less than or "useful" to humans. They do not have a room of their own.

It is a quick step away to have the hideous hierarchy of rich and poor, the ins and the outs, those who matter and those who don't matter. Hierarchies live comfortably in the house of dominion and domination. Wholeness lives happily in the house of tending and befriending.

[Donna Schaper is senior minister of Judson Memorial Church in New York City.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/biblical-animal-prophecy-reveals-ecology-all-about-peace>

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**July 12, 2016**

Sisters of Earth convention brings together women committed to caring for the planet

By Mandy Erickson  
Global Sisters Report

Colonization has not ended, said speakers at the July 7-10 [Sisters of Earth convention](#): Governments and industries are still taking land from indigenous people, largely destroying ecosystems for profit.

For example, while Spain no longer controls South America, "the way of thinking and feeling about the land did not change," said Medical Mission Sr. Birgit Weiler, who teaches at the Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University in Lima, Peru, and works with the Awajún and Wampi tribes of the Amazon, who are fighting oil extraction on their lands. The concepts that individuals can own land and that good use of land is to extract resources from it "are colonial mindsets very present still today."

[Sisters of Earth](#), an informal network of women, including sisters, concerned about the environment, held their biennial convention July 7-10 at Presentation Center, a retreat and convention spot nestled in the redwood trees of the Santa Cruz Mountains, about a 90-minute drive south of San Francisco.

The 75 attendees heard stories from Native American women and environmental activists, met in groups to discuss ecological issues within the Catholic church and without, and dined in a building insulated with scraps of blue jeans and constructed in a way that it stays cool without air conditioning.

The convention was a chance to gather with like-minded women, attendees said.

"Many of us are involved in nontraditional ministries, so it's great to get together with other sisters — not just women religious, other women — who are involved in the same thing," said Franciscan Sr. [Marya Grathwohl](#) from Billings, Montana. "To connect with other women who are committed to healthy food-growing or sustainable energy is very inspiring for me."

Speaker Beata Tsosie-Peña of Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico described how European colonization of the Americas has affected the psychology of her tribe.

"It wasn't just a physical genocide, but a cultural genocide," she said, adding that tribe members still internalize colonization.

"We act out among each other" with violence, substance abuse and suicide, said Tsosie-Peña, a program coordinator for [Tewa Women United](#), an intertribal organization.

Her community also still feels the impact of [nuclear testing in New Mexico](#), she said, with high rates of cancer. The bombing occurred in a sacred land, she noted: "There's a lot of feeling of powerlessness."

Melina Laboucan-Massimo, a climate and energy campaigner for Greenpeace Canada, described the devastation that has occurred from tar sands extraction in her native northern Alberta. A member of the Lubicon Cree tribe, Laboucan-Massimo said when she was young, in the 1980s, "I remember how pristine the land was."

Members of her tribe could still live off the forest by hunting, fishing and gathering. Now, that's impossible.

"It's changed so much just within my lifetime," she said.

The tar sands extraction requires clearing the forest and heating Earth, rendering the land lifeless, she said. It also creates toxic tailing ponds that poison the water and emit fumes that cause headaches and nausea among the residents. In Laboucan-Massimo's hometown of Little Buffalo, residents used to drink from the river, but now they develop rashes just from showering in the water.

Extracting oil from tar sands is a huge contributor to global warming, she added, not only because of the forest clearing, but also because of the gases released in the process.

"It's heartbreaking because of the massive destruction in my community," said Laboucan-Massimo, who writes, produces documentaries, and speaks about environmental degradation for Greenpeace Canada.

"Colonization is still happening," she added. "It's taken the form of resource extraction."

After learning about the cultural and environmental devastation that colonization wrought, conference attendees turned their attention to tactics they can use to fight for native cultures and the environment.

"We need to get out of the very patriarchal and colonial view of development," Weiler said, adding that education is critical. The children of the Peruvian Amazon tribes now learn about their cultural traditions and preserving the ecosystem in school, she said.

"When big companies want to come in and buy land for monoculture, [the students] will know why that's a bad idea," she said.

Laboucan-Massimo said one of the most effective ways to stop the tar sands extraction is convincing companies to divest from the industry.

"We're going after the financing," she said.

Religious orders can also divest from industries that harm the environment: Halifax Charity Sr. Maureen Wild said it would be good for those in religious communities "to start inquiring about our investments."

Tsosie-Peña described Tewa Women United's efforts to re-establish traditional farming methods: maintaining a library of heirloom seeds, creating community gardens, and inviting a group of amaranth growers from Guatemala to teach tribe members how to grow the nutritious plant they cultivated before the Europeans arrived.

"We're reconnecting these ancient trade routes," she said.

Conference speakers said the church also needs to make changes to preserve ecosystems and protect indigenous lands. That includes rescinding [a papal bull](#), issued by Pope Alexander in 1493, decreeing that "barbarous nations" be overthrown and granting much of the Americas to



Spain. The papal bull was part of the Doctrine of Discovery, which the U.S. Supreme Court justices used in [a 2005 court case](#) to argue that the Oneida Indian Nation land was not sovereign.

Margaret Swedish, an environmental activist and author, said coalitions can be very effective. "We heal [environmental degradation] by creating incredibly powerful partnerships" between activist organizations, native tribes and residents of towns facing polluting developments, she said.

She described a Midwest community threatened with an oil pipeline that built wind farms on the proposed pipeline route, giving the residents legal leverage.

"Not only are they stopping a pipeline, but they're creating a community around it," she said.

Swedish noted that environmental degradation affects not just forests and the animals that live off of them: People also need healthy ecosystems to thrive.

"Humans are one of the species we need to think about when we talk about the environment," she said. "It's not just about destroying the ecology of the planet, but about human lives."

[Mandy Erickson is a freelance writer based in the San Francisco Bay Area.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/sisters-earth-convention-brings-together-women-committed-caring-planet-40951>

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## **July 13, 2016**

**AME Church Adopts Climate Resolution: Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change Passed at 50th General Conference**

Blessed Tomorrow

PHILADELPHIA — The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church), the oldest independent Protestant denomination founded by Black people in the world, passed an historic climate resolution at their 50th General Conference today committing to support climate policies that will protect families, create healthy and safe communities, and build a clean energy future. This is the first resolution wholly dedicated to addressing climate change in the AME Church's 200 years of existence.

More than 30,000 clergy, leaders and members were on hand to vote on the resolution, which urges the AME Church leaders and members to build support for national, state, and local climate policies that will help make the groundbreaking 2015 Paris Climate Agreement to reduce global carbon emissions a reality.

“Damage to our climate puts the health of children, elderly, and those with chronic illnesses at greater risk and disproportionately impacts African Americans. We believe it is our duty to commit to taking action and promoting solutions that will help make our families and communities healthier and stronger,” stated Bishop John White, President, Council of Bishops of the AME Church. His colleague Bishop Reginald T. Jackson, Chair – Social Action Commission, further explained, “The AME Church has a deep history of ministering to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.”

To further support their efforts, the AME Church has become a founding partner of Blessed Tomorrow, a climate leadership program for faith organizations. Bob Perkowitz, president and founder of ecoAmerica, the organization that helped create the Blessed Tomorrow program, stated, “As we just experienced the warmest year on record, the AME Church’s support of climate solutions adds to the growing demand among faith leaders and people of goodwill worldwide for climate policies that will protect us and the world on which we all depend.”

“Climate is not just our issue; it’s everybody’s issue,” Bishop Vashti McKenzie, Presiding Prelate of the Thirteenth Episcopal District of the AME Church and Blessed Tomorrow Leadership Circle Member, explains on why the AME Church has partnered with Blessed Tomorrow. “It’s very important for the AME Church to reach out and work with other faith traditions on climate solutions so that we ensure a legacy of a healthier, safer world for future generations.”

The AME Church launched their resolution with a guide and resources to help their 7,000 congregations and 2.5 million members reduce damage to the climate and inspire others to lead on climate solutions in their homes, congregations, and communities. The AME Church will continue to collaborate with Blessed Tomorrow on additional resources for engagement and action. The full resolution can be read [here](#).

### **About the AME Church**

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church) is a predominantly African American Methodist denomination founded in 1816, and is the oldest independent Protestant denomination founded by Black people in the world. The AME Church’s mission is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deed. Today, the AME Church is located throughout the world with 7,000 congregations and 2.5 million members. Learn more at [amechurch.com](http://amechurch.com).

### **About Blessed Tomorrow and ecoAmerica**

ecoAmerica is a 501(c)3 research-based communications organization that builds public support for climate solutions in America by inspiring and supporting national leaders and agencies to lead by example and engage their stakeholders. ecoAmerica helped create Blessed Tomorrow, a comprehensive climate program for faith institutions offering support, guidance, and resources to inspire and empower faith climate change leadership. It is guided and built by a coalition of

diverse faith leaders committed to creating a more just and healthy world for our families, communities and neighbors. Learn more and join at [www.blessedtomorrow.org](http://www.blessedtomorrow.org).

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<http://blessedtomorrow.org/ame-resolution-press-release>

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## **July 13, 2016**

Defending lands, indigenous group fights dams in Brazil's Amazon

The Munduruku indigenous people are resisting hydroelectric dams on the Tapajós River, a major Amazon tributary. The hydropower, touted as green, would destroy forests - and could even increase greenhouse gas emissions.

DW

Indigenous leader Geraldo Krixí Munduruku has problems sleeping at night. At 58, he feels again the fear he knew in 1989, when he had heard about the construction of a hydropower dam on the Tapajós River in the Brazilian state of Para for the first time.

Nearly 25 years later, the days of calm for the Munduruku community living on the Tapajós, surrounded by the Amazon forest, are gone. The Brazilian government plans to begin building the hydropower facility São Luiz do Tapajós in 2016.

Since Krixí has learned about this, his community has organized resistance to stop the project.

"The river, as well as the forest, is like our mother. If the Tapajós is dammed, how are we going to survive? Where would we go?" asks Krixí.

Not only the Munduruku would suffer if the dam were to be built - an area the size of New York City would be inundated, including the plant and animal species living there. Effects would reverberate throughout the ecosystem.

Meanwhile, open questions remain over climate impacts around the dam complex.

### **Still no land title**

The Munduruku people, spread in villages along the Tapajós, have for centuries struggled for official demarcation of the Sawré Muybu Indigenous Territory, which encompasses an area of 178,000 hectares.

The Brazilian constitution guarantees permanent ownership of the lands traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples - as well as the exclusive use of soil resources, rivers and lakes within the area.

But the territory inhabited by the Munduruku at this part of Brazil's Pará state has not yet been recognized by the federal government.

With the threat of being flooded by the planned dam, indigenous leaders started to demarcate the land themselves. The Daje Kapap Eipi village has just erected a demarcation sign, very similar to the official one. "Whoever comes here and sees this sign will know this piece of land belongs to us, the Mundurukus," says Krixi.

### **Ecosystem impacts**

The Tapajós River still flows freely along 800 kilometers (500 miles) in Brazil's Mato Grosso, Amazonas and Para states. According to the latest plan presented by the Brazilian Energy Research Company (EPE), seven dams are planned to be built on the Tapajós basin by 2024.

The Munduruku people were never consulted about the construction of dams. Groups like Greenpeace have sought to support their resistance - also due to the ecological value of the site.

"It is an unnecessary and incredible destructive project," said Bunny McDiarmid, co-executive director of Greenpeace International, during a visit to the region.

The dam would inundate thriving ecosystems, including critical habitat for animals such as the ocelot, howler monkey and pink river dolphin, along with numerous bird, lizard and amphibian species. More than 300 species of fish in the region could be impacted.

Infrastructure around dam construction also contributes to deforestation, as it allows access for logging, livestock ranching and agri-business.

Paulo Adário, a consultant and one of the founders of Greenpeace Brazil, says there is no room for projects, which "bring environmental impacts like deforestation or those which go against the right of traditional people."

### **Climate concerns**

Greenpeace also points out that although hydroelectricity is climate-friendly in the sense that it doesn't involve the burning of fossil fuels, studies have shown that dams - especially in the tropics - release a large amount of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. This is due to rotting vegetation in flooded areas.

In addition, Greenpeace points out that the crippling droughts affecting some regions of Brazil recently could make the dams ineffective.

Adário points to a scientific Greenpeace study showing that the country's energy demand could be supplied by a combination of renewable and less destructive energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass.

### **Energy for development**

Brazil's Ministry of Mines and Energy argues that the hydropower is important for the country's development. The ministry says that "modern hydroelectric projects are characterized by the respect for the environment and local populations."

"They also define plans for environmental and social compensation, improvements to the local communities, and commitment to international protocols," the statement continues.

The power plant would make another plan of Brazil's transportation and agriculture ministries possible: to develop a waterway to transport grain production from Mato Grosso state to Asia through the Panama Canal. Mato Grosso is the largest soybean producer in Brazil, and its main buyer is China.

But for now, the construction of São Luiz do Tapajós - which would have around 8,000 megawatts of installed electricity generation capacity - may not begin. The Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (Ibama) has suspended the environmental license, saying that it will wait for a final assessment by the National Indigenous Foundation (Funai).

So the fate of the Tapajós - and therefore of the Munduruku - will depend on decisions from the capital Brasília.

### **'Modern-day war'**

Jeremy Campbell, a professor at the Roger Williams University in Rhode Island, is impressed with the strength of the Munduruku people. Once known as warriors who used to decapitate their enemies, they were seen by Europeans for the first time in mid-1700s.

Campbell has been doing research in the Tapajós region since 1999, when he witnessed violence and intimidation during a time of explosive land-grabbing. He called the Munduruku "an incredible united people."

"They are a warrior people, and they say they are at war because their entire way of life is threatened," Campbell told DW.

"If the dam is built, they will not longer be able to live in a traditional way," says Campbell - which is something they will never accept, he believes.

Antonio Dace Munduruku, 28 years old, is one of the villagers who has traveled to Brasília to fight in what he called a "modern-day war."

"People who live in the capitals and rich countries look at the Amazon as an empty place, as green area only. And everyone wants a piece of it," he says.

The father of two children, Dace says he wants his family to continue to live in their indigenous way. "Many people talk about climate and the role of forests - but we are the people who really preserve the forest," Dace concluded.

<http://www.dw.com/en/defending-lands-indigenous-group-fights-dams-in-brazils-amazon/a-19398301>

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**July 14, 2016**

Canada plans to lean on Indigenous knowledge to combat climate change

By Delaney Windigo  
Aboriginal Peoples Television Network National News

NIAGARA FALLS – For far too long governments ignored the warnings from elders.

Elders who could see shift in climate.

Ice beneath their feet thinner, more forest fires and temperatures rising.

The elders saw it but no one was listening according to Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna who addressed chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations' 37th annual general assembly in Niagara Falls Wednesday.

"There is clearly something unique and special in the relationship that First Nations have with the land and I believe that knowledge that supports those relationships is extremely important to our efforts to protect the environment and preserve these magnificent spaces," said McKenna.

McKenna didn't take questions from chiefs after her speech but is going to meet with them Thursday morning where she may hear from people like Chief Leo Friday of Kashechewan First Nation.

His community in northern Ontario along the Albany River is evacuated every spring. Friday is convinced climate change is the reason for the flooding.

He is asking for chiefs to support him in an AFN resolution to push the federal government to relocate the community to high ground on their territory.

Since 2014, Ottawa has spent more than \$13 million evacuating residents and Friday estimates since 2005 that number could reach nearly \$100 million.

Friday has said he's asked for the community to be moved in the past but it didn't happen.

“I think this time I want to do something different, if the chiefs can back me up moving forward with the relocation process, I think this thing will push a little harder than last time,” he said.

McKenna may also hear from Jonathan Solomon of the Mushkegowuk Council.

“Climate change is not going to happen tomorrow. It’s happening right now, it was since yesterday and I think we’re at a stage now where we’re beginning to see the impacts of climate change and we’re beginning to notice it,” said Solomon.

McKenna told chiefs the government plans to consult First Nations because Canada needs Indigenous knowledge and ideas to fight climate change.

“We need to be part of the process because our elders- we know the land, we grew up on the land, we know what we have seen- the changes that has happened over time. So we can be part of the process using our traditional knowledge,” said Solomon.

<http://aptn.ca/news/2016/07/14/canada-plans-to-lean-on-indigenous-knowledge-to-combat-climate-change/>

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**July 14, 2016**

AME Church: Climate change disproportionately hurts blacks

By Adelle M. Banks  
Religion News Service

African Methodist Episcopal Church members have joined the call of other religious leaders for action on climate change, citing its disproportionate effect on the health of black people.

“We can move away from the dirty fuels that make us sick and shift toward safe, clean energy like wind and solar that help make every breath our neighbors and families take a healthy one,” reads a resolution passed on Wednesday (July 13), at the end of the church’s quadrennial General Conference in Philadelphia.

The [resolution](#), echoing Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, pointed to research that shows climate change has a negative impact on African-Americans: 39 percent of Americans living near coal plants are people of color, and black children are four times as likely as their white counterparts to die from asthma.

“We believe it is our duty to commit to taking action and promoting solutions that will help make our families and communities healthier and stronger,” said Bishop John F. White, president of the AME Church’s Council of Bishops.

The statement calls for leaders and members of the 2.5 million-member denomination to advocate for support of the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement for reduction of carbon emissions and encourages congregations to have more energy-efficient buildings.

The resolution passed at their 50th General Conference, a gathering of some 30,000 people that marked the denomination's bicentennial.

In other action during the meeting, AME Church members:

- Maintained their stance opposing same-sex marriage. "The African Methodist Episcopal Church reaffirms our belief that marriage is between a man and a woman, and forbids our ministers from uniting in, performing or participating in same sex marriage ceremonies, or the use of our facilities for such events," concludes a position paper that passed during the meeting. A motion to remove that topic from the paper failed. Jackie Dupont-Walker, director of the church's Social Action Commission, said she expects discussion will continue "at every level of the church" before its next meeting in four years. "With the fastest-growing segment of our church being on the continent of Africa, it must be a very strong discussion," she said. "Because there's less willingness there than here to embrace it."
- Posthumously ordained a woman permitted to preach by [founder Richard Allen](#). Jarena Lee, a member of Bethel AME Church, which Allen started in 1791 in Philadelphia, was allowed to serve as a traveling preacher. "While the ordination did not take place, he affirmed her calling by the way he allowed her to use her talents and skills," said Dupont-Walker. Two centuries later, Lee was declared ordained by the denomination's senior bishop.
- Elected six bishops, two of whom made history. Bishop Frank M. Reid III, a longtime Baltimore pastor, follows both his father and grandfather, who were also bishops. In another first, Bishop Anne Henning Byfield, a presiding elder from the North District of the Indiana Annual Conference, is the sister of retired Bishop C. Garnett Henning Sr.

*Adelle M. Banks, production editor and a national reporter, joined RNS in 1995. An award-winning journalist, she previously was the religion reporter at the Orlando Sentinel and a reporter at The Providence Journal and newspapers in the upstate New York communities of Syracuse and Binghamton.*

<http://religionnews.com/2016/07/14/ame-church-climate-change-disproportionately-hurts-blacks/>

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**July 19, 2016**

Laudato Si' and the liturgical work ahead

By James Hug  
National Catholic Reporter



The first anniversary of Pope Francis's encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home," was [celebrated globally](#) with an [international week](#) of prayer, education, reflection and action. It was far from the usual treatment for a papal social encyclical. It is a tribute to Francis' activist spirit and broad appeal -- and to the fact that ordinary people around the planet are painfully aware of the urgency of the issues he raises so accessibly, so forcefully, so well.

Francis also shows his pastoral experience and wisdom in insisting that the major social and cultural changes that must take place in a short period of time will require education and spiritual development, both personal and communal.

The liturgical resources for developing and expressing that kind of mature spiritual consciousness and growth, however, are difficult to find. Jesus' contemplative reflections on God's care for the birds of the air or the beauty of the wild flowers in the field are standard texts for ecologically-focused prayer times. And there are some beautiful psalms. But generally, the Catholic church lacks liturgical resources for nurturing the ecological transformation that Francis is calling for and that the human family so desperately needs.

Some liturgical theologians in different Christian denominations are beginning to call for new materials, develop them and urge their quick approval for broad use. Catherine Vincie, a liturgical and sacramental theologian at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, is one notable and welcome voice in the Catholic community. But we cannot afford a glacial approval process if we hope to develop a healthy, broad-based ecological spirituality in time to reverse current destructive approaches to nature and prevent devastating global suffering.

Until these materials can be developed and made widely available, the challenge given by Pope Francis to nurture this spirituality must be taken up by liturgical planners and celebrants locally. That can happen if they bring to their liturgical preparations a deliberately broad consciousness of the global ecological context of life and liturgy as Francis describes it. The weekly liturgical texts must be consciously read as addressing the social and ecological context of our lives in the midst of the whole human family and at the heart of the complex and interrelated systems of Earth, our common home.

### **Nurturing 'Laudato Si'** in Sunday readings

An example of this approach can be found in the texts for the Sunday liturgy on June 12, which opened weeklong anniversary celebrations for *Laudato Si'*. At first glance, the texts seemed to have nothing to do with the themes Francis laid out in the encyclical.

In the first reading (2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13), the prophet Nathan berates King David for having Uriah the Hittite killed so he can take Uriah's wife Bathsheba. But when David admits he sinned, Nathan tells him God has forgiven him. In the gospel (Luke 7:36-8:3), Jesus is dining at the home of a Pharisee when "a sinful woman" enters, bathes his feet with her tears, dries them with her hair and anoints them with ointment, giving Jesus an occasion to teach the Pharisee and to assure the woman that her sins are forgiven.

Texts for nurturing a spirituality of care for the human family and our common home? Not obviously, for sure -- until, that is, they are heard in the context of what is happening to our planet and to the human community today. In that context, we are David, we are the sinful woman, we are the Pharisee.

### *We are David*

Through Nathan, God reminds David, "I anointed you king of Israel. I rescued you from the hand of Saul. I gave you Saul's house and wives for your own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more ...." God gave lavishly, but David could not look around without wanting more and taking it for himself.

So how are we are David? Isn't God saying to us, too, "I gave you ... I gave you ... I gave you ... and instead of gratitude you always want more, taking it from those around the world who have so little"? We can each fill in those blanks. We are the wealthiest nation in the history of humanity -- yet what we have is never enough; we insist we can't afford to share with those who have so little. Millions of voters even want walls built to keep desperate, needy people out and protect what we have for ourselves.

Our economic system itself is built on and driven by consumption, accumulation, competition and growth. We're assured that if it doesn't keep growing through more production, more consumption and more accumulation, the global economy will collapse, with suffering for everyone. And we can count on hearing endless promises of economic growth and increased wealth from our politicians and candidates as we head into the height of this year's campaign season.

Still, our economic system and our culture of consumption are the very forces that have brought us to the ecological and social crises the planet now faces. They promise rapidly worsening destruction and suffering in the decades ahead.

We are David, the king with dominating power in the world, too. We are the superpower with the ability and commitment to steer the global economy along the paths we have created. In far too many global meetings, U.S. lobbyists and government negotiators shape global policies and institutions to serve corporate economic interests without concern for what those policies will do to the poor of the world and to Earth itself.

We are David.

Ultimately, David's sin was forgiven (2 Samuel 12:13), though there were consequences to pay. Pope Francis is insistent that God's forgiving mercy is available to us, as well. But the consequences remain, and we must address them.

### *We are the sinful woman*

Whoever pays any attention to the ecological issues of our time comes to liturgy knowing that our own day-to-day decisions, actions and lifestyles have gotten us to where we are. Our

choices, day in and day out, have already driven countless species into extinction and are destroying habitats, including our own.

We are torn by the reality of it. Many of us want it to be otherwise, and we even weep at the destruction and suffering we're starting to see in bleaching coral reefs, thousands of miles of dead ocean, more severe storms, floods and wildfires, and rising sea levels. But we feel trapped in the institutions, systems and patterns of our lives, not knowing how to change, afraid of what the costs might be, but also longing for freedom, courage and better ways.

We are the sinful woman.

*We are the Pharisee*

I have to admit -- and I'm sure I'm not alone -- that I take personal refuge in the assurance that at least I'm not a climate change denier. I do what I can on a small scale. I shop at the farmers market, buying local and organic. I don't travel as much anymore. I shut off lights that aren't being used and cut back on my water use. I recycle and compost. I preach and write about the issues and urge the places where I live and work to consider going solar.

I don't do anything like the damage done by corporate leaders who refuse to take responsibility for the environmental costs they are shifting onto communities, governments or future generations. And I look in judgment at the politicians who are shirking their moral and political responsibilities for the common good of their people because of their dependence on campaign contributions from people and corporations who put economic profit before community health and planetary wellbeing. Those are the people and the situations where conversion would make a real difference.

Yes, we are the Pharisee, too.

What is happening to Earth and to the vulnerable and excluded peoples among us is sin. When species are pushed into extinction by our lifestyle choices, this is sin against God in creation. We use and abuse God's self-expression in nature and human society, failing in reverence and gratitude.

*We are invited to be Jesus*

In the context of what is happening to Earth seen through these scriptures, we are David. We are the sinful woman. We are the Pharisee. But we are also *invited to be Jesus*.

Jesus enters the story with an open heart. He was open to Simon the Pharisee, who invited him and then did not show him any of the normal courtesies like water for his dusty feet or a warm greeting. Jesus was open to the other guests. He was open to the sinful woman who came in weeping, made a huge scene, dared to touch him, bathed his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed them with ointment. It was only when he sensed Simon's judgmental response that Jesus spoke up gently: "Simon, I have something to say to you."

He then tells the parable of the creditor who forgives the debt of two people who can't repay him. One is a small debt, the other a major debt. When Jesus asks which debtor would love the creditor more, Simon reluctantly gives the answer Jesus is obviously looking for: the one who was forgiven the larger debt.

Jesus then suggests a different way of contemplating what has just gone on. The so-judged "sinful woman" has acted with great, deep-hearted love. So in Jesus's eyes, she is already forgiven for her many sins because "the one to whom little is forgiven loves little" (Luke 7:47), and she obviously loves deeply and much.

Aren't we hearing Jesus the teacher explain here the heart of his good news to the world? If you want to see as God sees, don't look through the eyes of the law; look through the eyes of love.

Through the eyes of the law, she is a sinner. Through the eyes of love, she is forgiven, holy.

Then Jesus turns to her and says, "Your sins are forgiven." I am convinced that the other guests are wrong when they interpret this as Jesus forgiving sins. I don't hear his words as what we today would call "absolution." I hear them as his reassurance to her that she can trust: "Your sins *are* forgiven" because you are so loving. Loving is the divine life present and active in her. She is alive with the Spirit of God.

### **New discovery and contemplation**

It is that contemplative vision through the eyes of love that Jesus invites us to embrace in our presence and response to life. It is the contemplative, loving vision that Pope Francis invites us into in *Laudato Si'*. He wants us to contemplate the beauty and complexity of creation, to see how everything is interconnected, to see ourselves as in it and of it.

Francis wants us to discover new possibilities, to see and reverence its value and even its sacredness. He invites us into a classic contemplation from his Jesuit/Ignatian spirituality background: He invites us to open our eyes and our hearts to discover in creation the loving presence and self-gift of God. He is convinced, as was Jesuit founder St. Ignatius of Loyola, that we will then find our hearts stirred with grateful love.

We are David. We are the sinful woman. We are the Pharisee.

But when we contemplate creation and human society with love, we too are forgiven. Looking through those eyes, we will recognize the results of that sin, the suffering and destruction globally. We will be, Francis is convinced, moved to compassion, transformation and healing action.

*Laudato Si'* is a call to conversion and urgent action, action rising naturally and forcefully from contemplative, loving, prayerful spirits.

Yes, we are David. We are the sinful woman. We are the Pharisee. And we are being called to be Jesus, speaking out with courage his way of approaching each other and the world with an open

heart and eyes of love. We are being called to be Jesus, discovering in and through our loving contemplation and care for our common home, that we too are forgiven many sins because we love much. And we are being offered the opportunity to take part in the birthing of the new creation.

### **Opening minds and hearts**

As in this example, the context within which we reflect and pray with biblical texts has a profound impact on the meaning we discover for our lives in the world today. Too often that context is limited to the personal, or at best, interpersonal dimensions of our lives. Consciously opening our minds and hearts to the full global and cosmic context in which we live will allow the vision and values of the Word of God to resonate more powerfully. It will open to us a more adequate sense of the guiding revelation of God for the human family here and now.

More adequate liturgical texts will eventually be able to help us grow in that consciousness. May they come soon. And may they be in accessible language that will open the eyes and touch the hearts of ordinary people everywhere.

In the meantime, we can and must read the Word and celebrate Eucharist conscious of our common home, our cosmic context and our integral ecological mission.

[Jesuit Fr. James Hug is the former president of the D.C.-based, social justice-focused Center for Concern.]

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/laudato-si-and-liturgical-work-ahead>

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**July 19, 2016**

Tibetan monk who went beyond religion

By Balan Moses  
Malay Mail Online

KUALA LUMPUR, July 19 — A Tibetan Buddhist leader in exile is changing the face of the ancient religion with a power-packed agenda that aims to improve the lives, and environment, of the people he constantly prays for.

Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang, who established the Drikung Kagyu seat in exile in Dehra Dun, India, after fleeing his native Tibet in 1975, has put his hand to the plow in an effort to fast-forward Buddhism to meet the needs of the 21st century.

He has started a growing movement known internationally as Go Green & Go Organic in Ladakh, Kashmir (dubbed Little Tibet), through which he hopes to stop global warming and its terribly effects in its tracks by embarking on a programme to green the earth.

“You have to pray but you have to also go out into the world to change lives through practical methods so that the people benefit in practical ways,” the United Nations Global Mountain Partnership ambassador says in an illuminating 45-minute interview yesterday where the softspoken monk reveals a bond with the people that goes beyond the monastery.

The 71-year-old-to-be has become a “religious revolutionary” with a new dynamic that seeks to make Buddhism more relevant to its adherents — and people of other faiths.

“My entry into all this started when I realised many years ago that a river that was brimming with water had over the years trickled down to a stream that we could jump over,” he says with incredulity.

For Chetsang, it was a far cry from the gushing rivers of his youth.

In its wake, came “cloud bursts” in another part of the year that rained terror on villagers unused to floods that washed away their homes.

The extremes in weather made him realise that urgent action was needed to forestall a worsening of the phenomenon.

It was at this point that he assumed the additional role of environmental guardian at home and abroad, leaving active soul-saving to younger monks while he travelled the world on an environmental mission with religious fervour.

“I do some environmental and peace work. Everybody has to do this too, regardless of religion, territorial boundaries or anything else,” the red and yellow-robed head of a religious order that goes back to 1179 says in understatement as I interview him in the 10th floor hotel room in Kuala Lumpur.

The air unfortunately is too warm for a man used to near freezing temperatures.

The septuagenarian, who has just returned from an exhausting trip to Penang and Alor Star besides attending to commitments in Kuala Lumpur, surprisingly does not look fatigued.

The hands-on man walks over to examine the air-conditioning LED apparatus on the wall revealing the simplicity at his core.

Chetsang has only good things to say about the Indian government that has given subsidies to locals to green the environment.

He is now actively involved in encouraging the planting of a species called the Sea Buck Thorn which will encourage the local economy by yielding valuable ingredients for cosmetics and medicines.

Chetsang, who grew up near the Himalayas that tower over the rest of the world, is worried about the reduction in snowfall in the mountain range (15 per cent less now compared to 30 years ago).

“Global warming has definitely affected the Himalayas. I understand that huge chunks of ice have travelled to the Yangtze river in China,” he says.

Speaking excitedly in English that he picked up while working in fast food outlets in the United States in his younger days, the man who is also fluent in Mandarin, talks of the ‘ice stupa’ (artificial mini glaciers) that he and his fellow environmentalists came up with during winter to supply much-needed water for crops in spring.

“We developed a system where water was brought down from the upper reaches of a river to become ice structures lower down that yielded water for irrigation when the weather turned warm,” he says.

The Swiss want him to reprise the system in the cold confines of the land-locked country that also needs additional water supplies part of the year.

“Our engineering team is going over to Switzerland later this year to teach them the art of creating ice stupas,” he says.

Has his green vision caught on with locals and the monks under his charge?

The footballer as a youth, who tries to swim as much as he can on his travels to keep fit besides doing freehand exercises, held a series of meetings with the community three years ago to get them on board.

“I met up with monks at monasteries, schools and government officials among others, to get them involved in the greening project,” he says content that organic farming that he introduced has caught on with farmers.

The senior cleric is also a crusader for interfaith dialogue as ‘all religions have to work for peace.’

“There are no more borders and no more gates between people of different faiths. All of us — Christians, Muslims, Buddhists have to learn about other religions. How will we work with each other if we don't know one another?”

What next for the intrepid monk-cum-environmentalist who barely has time to meet commitments in Ladakh before flying off to meet other responsibilities the world over?

Chetsang has a 10-year plan “if I am alive that long” that involves training the next generation to take over.

The monk with a difference is all set to continue making his mark on the world of Buddhism and society at large with his huge heart for mankind.

<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/tibetan-monk-who-went-beyond-religion>

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**July 20, 2016**

Rising temperatures drying up history, one lake at a time

By Daksha Rangan  
The Weather Network

For urban dwellers and suburbanites, the changing pace of global weather patterns might only be cause for concern when minor anomalies take place -- a snowless winter, dry spring, or cooler summer, for example.

But for rural residents -- namely, some of the world's indigenous communities -- earth's rising temperatures have a stark impact. This is the case for locals in the Andes of Bolivia, who once thrived off the country's second-largest lake.

After decades of annual El Niño droughts and water diversion through the Andes, Bolivia's Lake Poopó completely dried up in December 2015. For Uru-Muratos, an indigenous population native to the lake's surrounding area of Llapallapani, the loss has had a damaging effect.

Besides being a source of livelihood for fishing families, Lake Poopó was a symbol of identity for the Uru-Murato people, the New York Times (NYT) reports. Uru-Muratos are the region's oldest indigenous community, having shifted through the centuries of political and social upheaval. A changing climate, however, leaves the community with no choice but to flee.

"The lake was our mother and our father," Adrián Quispe, a fisherman from Llapallapani, told the NYT. Along with his five brothers, Quispe is one of hundreds of Llapallapani's hundreds of fishermen raising a family. "Without this lake, where do we go?"

The United Nations has highlighted the heightened effects of climate change on indigenous populations, noting that at-risk populations span all corners of the globe -- from the Himalayas to the Arctic, the Amazon to Scandanavia.

"Indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, owing to their dependence upon, and close relationship with the environment and its resources," a UN backgrounder from the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues reads.

Weather Network meteorologist and science writer Scott Sutherland adds that dependency on agriculture poses the most significant threat to those living in rural environments, including indigenous peoples.



"Specifically for indigenous peoples, their traditional methods of growing crops, hunting, trapping and fishing are becoming more difficult as climates shift, especially in the Arctic," Sutherland says. "In the Arctic, where temperatures are rising at roughly twice the rate as the global average, dwindling sea ice is impacting on local wildlife, which is affecting the local indigenous people who rely on this wildlife for food and other resources."

### **Strongest impact on the poor**

Recent research also supports that the [world's poorest nations are most likely to bear the brunt of rising temperatures](#), despite having the lowest CO2 emissions.

These findings also apply to those within a low-income bracket in wealthy nations, Sutherland says.

"Although urban dwellers are surrounded by more development and infrastructure, the poor living in these environments will still be affected the most by climate change. Of all those living in cities, the poor are most likely to be without luxuries such as air conditioning, and they are most likely to have jobs where they must spend the majority of the day outdoors."

Cities tend to feel the extremes of heat waves due to the *urban heat island*, Sutherland adds. "[T]his means more exposure for the city's poor during the more frequent and more extreme heat waves that are expected due to climate change.

<https://www.theweathernetwork.com/us/news/articles/climate-and-environment/rising-temperatures-drying-up-history-one-lake-at-a-time/70321>

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**July 20, 2016**

The Unfolding Story of the Universe

A Conversation with Mary Evelyn Tucker and Julianne Warren

By Sam Mowe

Garrison Institute

*In their [Journey of the Universe](#) project—which includes a film, book, and website—philosopher Brian Thomas Swimme and historian of religions Mary Evelyn Tucker attempt to tell the biggest story ever told: the history of the universe. Through a compelling blend of scientific facts and humanistic inquiry, they move from exploring the formation of the galaxies, stars, planets, and evolution of life on Earth to reflecting on the role of humanity during our current moment of social and ecological challenges.*

*One person whose work has been deeply influenced by the Journey of the Universe project is writer and ecological thinker [Julianne Warren](#). In her different projects exploring the Anthropocene, Warren has used Journey of the Universe as a touchstone while she asks questions about hope and human responsibility.*

*I recently spoke with Tucker and Warren by phone to discuss some of the big ideas explored in Journey of the Universe, such as the transformative power of story, the relationship between science and the humanities, and how we can create meaning in the space between knowledge and mystery.*

**Sam Mowe:** Mary Evelyn, you've written that "the universe is not simply a place, it's a story." What do you mean by that?

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** I'm suggesting that an unfolding narrative is one way of looking at the evolution of this 14 billion year old universe. Maybe the universe is best understood not as discrete incidents of evolution, but as a whole unfolding dynamic and developmental process, which is like a story. If you look at the universe as a place, it can feel a little bit static. Alternatively, we can begin to see ourselves as part of a dramatic story that's still unfolding and in which we have a part to play.

It's important to note that the understanding of evolution is only about 150 years old in human consciousness since Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Developmental time is something human consciousness is just beginning to grasp. And, in a certain sense, this understanding allows us to be co-creators with this process.

**Sam Mowe:** How does understanding the universe as a story change our relationship with it?

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** This epic story of evolution has an amazing potential to activate wonder, awe, and beauty that can sink into our bones and muscles. It's a story that can physically activate the energy of love for the beauty of ongoing life and the continuity of what's right in front of us. This possibility of activating a zest for life can give us the energy for doing the transformative work required to honor that beauty—whether it's conservation, education, political work, protest work, or whatever the realm is.

The deepest sources of human energy come from story. Recently, Peter Crane, the dean at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, gave a talk on his life work on the history of angiosperms, namely flowering plants. He explained that these plants—of which there are over 250,000 species—have a history of some 145 million years. What paleobotanists are able to do now is actually unpack the fossil record and recreate—through the help of technology—the flowers, the pistil, the stems, and the rest. So he showed us this 100 million year old flower bud, which was opening in this wonderful kinetic way, and it kept opening and opening and opening. It was completely riveting for the audience. It was one of the most spectacular things I've ever seen.

So now we're able to visualize the extraordinary power of deep time. There's an invitation here to think about how these species have emerged and changed over deep time.

**Julianne Warren:** I think that the way we integrate technology and creativity with our stories makes all the difference. The 20<sup>th</sup> century American literary ecologist, Aldo Leopold, observed a cultural cleavage in his best-selling book, *A Sand County Almanac*. In some peoples' stories, he explained, science is the sharpener of their swords. For others, science is a searchlight on their

universe. In other words, science can help us invent tools for conquering land and each other. It can also stimulate humans' curiosity and wonder—as at the opening of an ancient flower bud—deepening our understandings and our skillful affection for all, as well as for appreciating mystery and our own ignorance.

**Sam Mowe:** There have been different cosmological stories told about the universe in various cultures around the world throughout history. One thing that makes the *Journey of the Universe* story different is that there is scientific evidence to back up the narrative. What do scientific facts add to the story?

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** Scientific facts ground the story so that humans can enter into the creative processes of evolution. For example, the self-organizing dynamics of the universe that give rise to galaxies and stars stagger the mind and light up the imagination. And the imagination is what can connect us to understanding and interpreting these processes. So I think our challenge is to take the scientific knowledge and make it into wisdom, make it into something we can reflect on. When we look at pictures from the Hubble telescope, that's contemplation. You get the feeling of, *Wow, was I birthed out of these systems?* The stars really are our ancestors—literally and metaphorically.

**Julianne Warren:** I would add that the rising understanding that humans have a large influence on the planet—its climate, soils, biodiversity, and so on—also presents a great irony. This is one irony of the Anthropocene: We can't control Earth the way that some of us thought that we could. The very science and technology applied to control the planet has revealed people's inability to do so. And, everyone is, in a sense, trapped in the unintended, unwanted consequences of past human actions.

Another Anthropocene irony—one that unfetters us—is that while members of the dominating culture have considered themselves superior to the rest of nature and have tried to apply science and technology to set ourselves safely apart, what we are discovering is that we are inalienable. Though human influence is felt everywhere, human beings are embedded in a still-wild Earth. This means that we need to understand our mutual interdependencies better so that we can participate more generatively within the ecosphere.

**Sam Mowe:** This is interesting because initially I was thinking that you might be using scientific facts in *Journey of the Universe* as a strategic way to reach people, because many people take science more seriously than other modes of knowledge. Listening to you now it sounds like you're saying the scientific dimensions of the story, if told in a compelling way, have a special kind of power.

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** Yes, that's right. It's worth pointing out that Brian Swimme and I took the science very seriously. This project was ten years in the making because we wanted to get the science right. We worked in the summers for a number of years with a group of scientists and we would go over different parts of the story. A number of scientists read the manuscript. The book was published in the science division of Yale University Press, and that's not easy. So the science is very tight in terms of its factual accuracy.

In each chapter there's a scientific fact. There's also a metaphor—such as the similarities between a whirlpool and our breath—that points towards meaning or how human beings fit in. So the scientific fact looked at metaphorically can capture the human imagination. From there we explored ideas such as connectivity, relationality, and complex interdependence.

**Julianne Warren:** This approach invites people to look at how science actually works and then reflect on how it can be part of a story that has meaning. It's not static because we're always discovering new things with science. And each time we discover something new, if we want to live generatively, we have to reorient ourselves to be more in tune with the new knowledge. Since we don't know everything, and the story is so big, a lot of different points of view can take place within it, space opens up for imagination regarding ways to do that, including fueling new questions for science to explore.

**Sam Mowe:** It sounds like science offers the foundation of the story, giving us factual knowledge, and that the humanities are employed to build on top of it with creativity and meaning.

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** What we are really trying to do with *Journey of the Universe* is create a new genre of a fusion of science and humanities. We're not looking at science as just facts or numbers or equations or graphs, but science in relation to the humanities—literature, history, art, music, philosophy, and religion and so on. These are the disciplines that have tried to understand how humans have lived in the past and how might we live more integrally in the future. So *Journey* is a conscious fusion of fact, metaphor, and meaning. This can confuse people because they might think it's just about science. Other people might think it's only a spiritual vision. Actually it's a more subtle and complex coming together of various disciplines.

I would also like to point out that we're not trying to say that the *Journey of the Universe* perspective overrides longstanding cultural and religious systems that have given humans a sense of meaning, purpose, connection, and community. It is not a triumphal hegemonic science story. It's one that respects traditional stories but sees the unifying potential of this great epic of evolution.

**Julianne Warren:** I have taught classes where, in between chapters of *Journey of the Universe*, we'd jump over and read some of Charles Darwin's work from the Galapagos. This pairing has helped students see how a scientist might be filled with a sense of wonder and how he was giving meaning to some of the things he was learning. Darwin himself was taking bits of evidence about the relationships between different beings and putting the flesh of meaning on it by saying, *We're kin with all of life and, as kin, we can have empathy for one another.*

At the same time, though, some of this thinking was applied to eugenics with this idea of the survival of the fittest. Science by itself doesn't tell you what you should do with knowledge. You have to have other ways of knowing to blend with those observations in order for there to be meaning. We have been misusing science in order to misuse the earth. Now we have to pull ourselves back to contemplate new and fresh understandings combined with the desire to promote life.

**Sam Mowe:** This example highlights how, even though science does help provide a foundation of knowledge for us to interpret, there is still always so much we don't know. I wonder if you might speak about the relationship between mystery and meaning. What is your process for creating meaning out of facts that can be interpreted in various different ways?

**Julianne Warren:** Let's start from the stars as an example. The ways that gravity and fusion, supernovas and atomic dust combine to bring forth Earth. I just can't stop thinking about it. There's a paradox of wanting more knowledge, but at the same time enjoying how much I don't know about it. In between the knowing and not knowing there is all this space for my imagination. The desire for simple answers is a way to try to control things. It doesn't work. Instead we can try to embrace and dwell in ambiguity.

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** I love this notion of ambiguity along with a search for meaning. I think that's actually what creativity is. We don't know from where a poem arises or the composition of music. Beethoven was deaf and he was still composing music. There is an idea that creativity arises from sources beyond ourselves. If we're in tune with certain aspects of this living Earth system, we may pick up on something and then release a piece of art or music or whatever. But it's all very staggering. Some scientists at Princeton recently told us that we don't really understand how galaxies emerge, even though there's been a lot of science on it.

Dwelling in mystery and being open to uncertainty is one of the great tasks of a human being. Eventually we can "live the questions," as Rainer Maria Rilke said. *Meaning* is such a laden term, I hesitate even to use the word, but I do think that fundamentally we are meaning-making animals. We know that many other animals have communication and language and all kinds of creativity within their worlds, but the meaning dimension might distinguish us. And this kind of large-scale story opens us up to depths of meaning that we hadn't really thought about before.

This speaks to our capacity for symbolic consciousness, which is a dynamic change engine because we are all moved by symbols. You can see this is why the advertising and media worlds are so powerful. But if we can create the connectivity to these interrelated processes and then begin to reflect on them symbolically and reconfigure our own social, political, and economic patterning in relation to the patterning of nature, then we're releasing new kinds of energy for creativity.

**Julianne Warren:** I agree. At least around me, people who are dealing with confronting the realities that we're faced with now sometimes don't want to talk about what's good about human beings. But we can rediscover that there are different ways to be human; there always have been. We don't have to be dominators; we don't have to have just simple answers. Even with climate change and the Anthropocene, there is still space to play together. Perhaps it's never been more important to do so.

**Mary Evelyn Tucker:** Yes, there is the simultaneous awareness in our time of the beauty of evolution and deep time and, at the same time, an awareness of extinction and this destruction we're causing on the planet. The whole process of evolution is threaded through with similar dynamics of loss and creativity. I think part of the joy that we're trying to evoke in *Journey* is

that loss and creativity go closely together. They're intermingled and we can't avoid that. The suggestion is that in between these forces we may find our way forward as a species.

<https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/unfolding-story-universe/>

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**July 24, 2016**

'World can't afford to silence us': black church leaders address climate change

One of the largest and oldest black churches in the US warns that black people are disproportionately harmed by global warming and fossil fuel pollution

By Oliver Milman  
The Guardian

African American religious leaders have added their weight to calls for action on climate change, with one of the largest and oldest black churches in the US warning that black people are disproportionately harmed by global warming and fossil fuel pollution.

The African Methodist Episcopal church has passed its first resolution in its 200-year history devoted to climate change, calling for a swift transition to renewable energy.

"We can move away from the dirty fuels that make us sick and shift toward safe, clean energy like wind and solar that help make every breath our neighbors and families take a healthy one," states the resolution, which also points to research showing that black children are four times as likely as white children to die from asthma.

The [resolution](#) was passed at the church's general conference in Philadelphia, where more than 30,000 members gathered. The AME church, the oldest independent Protestant denomination founded by black people in the world, has about 7,000 congregations and 2.5m members.

"Damage to our climate puts the health of children, elderly, and those with chronic illnesses at greater risk and disproportionately impacts African Americans. We believe it is our duty to commit to taking action and promoting solutions that will help make our families and communities healthier and stronger," stated Bishop John White, president of the council of bishops of the AME church.

The resolution follows an open letter sent by African American clergy last year that called for political leaders to take "bold action to address climate change".

The [letter states](#): "The voices of communities whose inhabitants look like us often are dismissed or disregarded. But the world cannot afford to silence us, and we cannot afford to be – and will not be – silent. Climate change most directly impacts the poor and marginalized, but ultimately, everyone is in jeopardy."

Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, director of AME church's social action commission, said that will "hold elected officials accountable" over climate change.

"In communities of color, the church has been the voice on these kind of issues and we need to continue to be that voice," she told the Guardian. "Many people may have heard that climate change is some sort of political trick – but when we speak, people will listen to us. We have an obligation to make this a focal point."

Dupont-Walker said that the church's voter mobilization campaign will work throughout the 2016 election cycle to question candidates on climate change. Local officials and landlords will also be put under pressure over inadequate housing and infrastructure that helps spread pollution to black communities.

[According to the NAACP](#), African Americans emit far less carbon dioxide per person compared with white people and yet will bear the brunt of heat-related deaths, due to the concentration of black people in cities.

Faith leaders across the world have expressed alarm over climate change, with Pope Francis [warning last year](#) that "we may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth". Some churches have [backed the campaign](#) to divest from fossil fuels.

June was the warmest on record in [both the US and globally](#), marking the 14th consecutive month of record-breaking heat worldwide.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jul/24/african-methodist-episcopal-church-climate-change-letter>

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**July 25, 2016**

Recycling center in Brooklyn creates community while serving those in need

By Gail DeGeorge  
Global Sisters Report

Her gloved hands deep in buckets of fruit pieces, vegetable peels and other food dreck, Sr. Ana Martinez de Luco flashes a smile as she mixes what will become Sure We Can's own brand of compost.

She then tosses clear plastic bags bulging with cans into piles that tower above her head. She hops on a forklift to move wooden pallets, clearing a new spot for the vegetable garden sprouting in an industrial site in Brooklyn. And as she weaves her way around bins, bags and crates, she greets each of the more than a dozen people — often known as "canners" — who are there to count, sort and redeem what they've collected from the endless stream of cans and bottles that New Yorkers discard.

As the only nonprofit redemption center in New York City, [Sure We Can](#) is an economic lifeline for more than 400 canners. They can cash in what they've gathered — in small amounts or bulk — for the state-mandated 5 cents per piece, or they can earn a bit more by counting and sorting, which helps Sure We Can reduce its costs.

The organization, co-founded in 2007 by Martinez de Luco and Eugene Gadsden, has become a community. Canners serve on its board of directors, and intertwined with Sure We Can's mission of promoting environmental sustainability is helping its clients feel supported and respected.

With contagious enthusiasm, Martinez de Luco describes big plans for Sure We Can.

"Here is where the garden will go," she said, pointing to a concrete slab. A classroom will take shape where the garden is now for field trips, classes and theater groups in which students learn about environmental responsibility and sustainability. A rainwater collection system provides water for the squash, tomatoes and other plants. The composting system, used on Sure We Can's own garden the last four years, will soon package fertilizer for sale.

Martinez de Luco is on a mission — and on a deadline. On July 31, Sure We Can kicks off a [campaign to raise \\$3 million](#) in 18 months to buy its current location in Brooklyn, the organization's fifth home in 10 years, which it has been renting since 2010.

July 31 will also be the day Sure We Can says farewell to Martinez de Luco as she turns the organization over to Agustina Besada, who earlier this month became executive director after serving as a volunteer and board president. Martinez de Luco plans to take a few months off then return as a volunteer.

Martinez de Luco credits the start of Sure We Can to her partnership with co-founder Gadsden, the "king of canners" who taught her the fine points of can-collecting more than a decade ago.

### **Needing to get her feet on the ground**

In 2004, she was working in New York at [UNANIMA](#), a nongovernmental coalition of 20 congregations of Catholic sisters that aims to educate United Nations policymakers on issues concerning women and children living in poverty; immigrants and refugees; and the environment. She felt a call to serve the poor more directly.

"I found meaning in doing [U.N. work], but my personality — my gift is just to work with people and to share life with people, especially people who are in need," she said. "To go in the streets at the same time I was going to the U.N. helped me keep my feet on the ground."

She had grown up in a small village in the Basque area of Spain, entered religious life at age 19 as a [Carmelite Sister of Charity](#) and had spent much of her life working in social services in the Philippines. (She became part of the [Sisters for Christian Community](#) in 2014.)



"I felt strongly the invitation to share my life with the people in the street but didn't really implement it" in the Philippines, she said. "When I came to the U.S., that pull was very much alive. This was the place. It was a faith issue, to share my life with them."

She volunteered with an organization serving the homeless and began canning as a way to earn a bit of money and, more importantly, the trust of those she wanted to help.

"The fact that I started picking up cans helped me to enter faster the community of people in the street," she said. "I was no longer a strange figure but showed them that I was doing what they were doing, so they thought I must be in great need."

A mutual friend introduced her to Gadsden, who had taught dozens to can efficiently. He worked with Martinez de Luco for months before learning she was a sister.

"I've believed in God all my life, and maybe it's a good thing that I ran into a sister — a good thing and a God-thing," Gadsden said.

In 2005, a cash-in center closed, leaving canners in Manhattan without an easy way to redeem what they collected. Retailers would take some cans and bottles, but it wasn't practical for canners to visit multiple sites.

Martinez de Luco and Gadsden talked of the need for a new large-scale redemption center. They approached various companies and organizations with no success. After one particularly disappointing meeting, she said Gadsden reassured her, "When one door is closed, another door is opened."

Her work at the U.N. for UNIMA and another nongovernmental organization, [Partnership for Global Justice](#), helped open the door to assist those on the street. After Martinez de Luco told the sisters there about the issue with the redemption center, one arranged a meeting with a friend who was a Wall Street financier. He put Martinez de Luco in contact with an attorney to draw up incorporation papers in 2007.

They recruited board members. At first, Martinez de Luco was reluctant to join the board, worrying that it would separate her from the canning community. But when she and Gadsden realized they needed to have canners on the board so that their needs and views were represented, they joined also. Sure We Can's board now has canner representatives as part of its structure, one from each of the primary language-speaking communities — Spanish, Chinese and English — of people who form its clientele.

Sure We Can first opened in a public storage area in Manhattan in 2008. But the site was close to the upscale shops and wealthy residences of Fifth Avenue, and neighbors blamed Sure We Can for attracting homeless people to the area. Then began a series of moves until 2009, when it found its current spot in Brooklyn, nestled near a school and alongside other industrial operations.

"This space works," Martinez de Luco said.

"Our roots are deep. It would be hard to move," she added, looking around at the site, with its system of sorting bins and bags, a trailer that serves as an office, and a bicycle that provides the pedal-power to sift the compost.

Brightly colored murals decorate wagons and walls. The site owners are a family that has experienced hardship and has worked with Sure We Can but now want to sell the site, Martinez de Luco said. Sure We Can's lease expires at the end of December 2017.

"Sometimes I am dreaming of all that has to be done," Martinez de Luco said.

### **Aiming for self-sufficiency**

The grassroots [#60MillionCans fundraising drive](#) that kicks off July 31 is to convince individuals, buildings, schools and businesses to collect and contribute empty cans and bottles — or donate the equivalent in money — along with foundation and corporate donations to help Sure We Can buy the site.

This year, Sure We Can will handle more than 10 million pieces. The nonprofit works on a margin basis: Collectors get a minimum fee for unsorted cans and bottles and more per tray of sorted material. The companies that pick up the bottles and cans pay a few cents more for sorted and bagged cans and bottles. The nonprofit employs 10 workers on a full-time or part-time basis.

Martinez de Luco credits Sure We Can's team — staffers such as Rene del Carmen, "who can fix anything," and volunteers like Noel Colaneri, who serves on the board and had the initial idea for the fundraising drive — for the organization's success and community spirit.

It was that welcoming atmosphere that struck Pierre Simmons when the musician first visited Sure We Can more than two years ago to redeem cans and bottles he collected to supplement his income.

"There was an air about it that was very personal," he said. "People were willing to help me, to show me the ropes and how to sort stuff out right."

He became a regular client, then presented a speech for an Earth Day celebration that Sure We Can was involved with and joined the board as a canner representative. He said he didn't know of Martinez de Luco's background as a sister initially, but after meeting her, he said he realized the organization's "giving and spiritual side came from her."

The spirit of Sure We Can will remain as Besada takes over leadership, Simmons said.

"She's been getting a lot of mentoring from Ana," he said. "And we will still see Ana around — she's the heart of this thing."

Besada knows that she is filling big shoes. "I'm taking her job," she said. "Ana can't be replaced."

### **Transition plan, new leadership**

A native of Argentina, Besada knew of similar cooperatives, organizations of [cartoneros](#) or cardboard collectors there. She began volunteering with Sure We Can in 2013 with a friend, making wallets out of plastic bags while earning a master's degree in sustainable development at Columbia University.

Initially, she planned to focus her career on corporate sustainability but began to recognize Sure We Can's potential.

"I realized I was spending more time talking with Ana about the issues here," she said.

She prepared a vision plan for the organization and began helping with other projects as a volunteer. She joined the board, presented an updated proposal for fundraising and redesigned the website. She then became president of the board and took on more responsibility. When Martinez de Luco expressed a desire to step down, the board appointed Besada to take over as executive director.

Besada sees opportunities to expand Sure We Can's operations once it succeeds in the #60MillionCan drive to secure its site. Like supermarkets and other redemption centers, Sure We Can gets 8.5 cents per can or bottle from distributors, which will only pick up their brands of containers. Hence, the need — and incentive — to have canners sort material. The additional 3.5 cents and additional grants cover operating costs.

"I can bring in more of the business side to make it work on its own, to make it economically sustainable and formalize the compost and other programs so they don't have to rely on grants," Besada said.

The transition has been purposefully slow, Besada said. "Everybody knows me. I've been doing all the different jobs to get to know the people. That is very important. This is a community, and it takes time."

Martinez de Luco is looking forward to her break but more so to coming back to Sure We Can to spend more time with people. Her heart goes out particularly to the elderly who sustain themselves by redeeming bottles and cans — the average age of canners at Sure We Can is 65. She knows the canners' families, whose husbands are sick, how their children are doing in school.

"In coming back, I would just return to what I like most and is the easiest thing for me to do: being Ana, which is the vision that brought me to this, just to accompany people on the streets, at the stations, in the parks," she said. "People who feel sick in many ways, sometimes they need someone to encourage them to go to the hospital and accompany them. Sometimes it is just to listen."

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/recycling-center-brooklyn-creates-community-while-serving-those-need-41096>

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**July 25, 2016**

What It Takes to Clean the Ganges

More than a billion gallons of waste enter the river every day. Can India's controversial Prime Minister save it?

By George Black  
The New Yorker

*More than a billion gallons of raw sewage and industrial effluent enter the river every day. The Hindu-nationalist government's restoration initiative plays directly into India's charged religious and caste politics.*

The Ganges River begins in the Himalayas, roughly three hundred miles north of Delhi and five miles south of India's border with Tibet, where it emerges from an ice cave called Gaumukh (the Cow's Mouth) and is known as the Bhagirathi. Eleven miles downstream, gray-blue with glacial silt, it reaches the small temple town of Gangotri. Pilgrims cluster on the rocky riverbank. Some swallow mouthfuls of the icy water, which they call *amrit*—nectar. Women in bright saris wade out into the water, filling small plastic flasks to take home. Indians living abroad can buy a bottle of it on Amazon or on eBay for \$9.99.

To hundreds of millions of Hindus, in India and around the world, the Ganges is not just a river but also a goddess, Ganga, who was brought down to Earth from her home in the Milky Way by Lord Shiva, flowing through his dreadlocks to break the force of her fall. The sixteenth-century Mogul emperor Akbar called it "the water of immortality," and insisted on serving it at court. In 1615, Nicholas Withington, one of the earliest English travellers in India, wrote that water from the Ganges "will never stinke, though kepte never so longe, neyther will anye wormes or vermine breede therein." The myth persists that the river has a self-purifying quality—sometimes ascribed to sulfur springs, or to high levels of natural radioactivity in the Himalayan headwaters, or to the presence of bacteriophages, viruses that can destroy bacteria.

Below Gangotri, the river's path is one of increasing degradation. Its banks are disfigured by small hydropower stations, some half built, and by diversion tunnels, blasted out of solid rock, that leave miles of the riverbed dry. The towering hydroelectric dam at Tehri, which began operating in 2006, releases a flood or a dribble or nothing at all, depending on the vagaries of the season and the fluctuating demands of the power grid. The first significant human pollution begins at Uttarkashi, seventy miles or so from the source of the river. Like most Indian municipalities, Uttarkashi—a grimy cement-and-cinder-block town of eighteen thousand—has no proper means of disposing of garbage. Instead, the waste is taken to an open dump site, where, after a heavy rain, it washes into the river.

A hundred and twenty miles to the south, at the ancient pilgrimage city of Haridwar, the Ganges enters the plains. This is the starting point for hundreds of miles of irrigation canals built by the British, beginning in the eighteen-forties, after a major famine. What's left of the river is ill-equipped to cope with the pollution and inefficient use of water for irrigation farther

downstream. Below its confluence with the Yamuna River, which is nearly devoid of life after passing through Delhi, the Ganges picks up the effluent from sugar refineries, distilleries, pulp and paper mills, and tanneries, as well as the contaminated agricultural runoff from the great Gangetic Plain, the rice bowl of North India, on which half a billion people depend for their survival.

By the time the river reaches the Bay of Bengal, more than fifteen hundred miles from its source, it has passed through Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Kolkata, a hundred smaller towns and cities, and thousands of riverside villages—all lacking sanitation. The Ganges absorbs more than a billion gallons of waste each day, three-quarters of it raw sewage and domestic waste and the rest industrial effluent, and is one of the ten most polluted rivers in the world.

Indian governments have been trying to clean up the Ganges for thirty years. Official estimates of the amount spent on this effort vary widely, from six hundred million dollars to as much as three billion dollars; every attempt has been undone by corruption and apathy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, elected in May of 2014, is the latest to try. Modi and his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., campaigned on promises of transforming India into a prosperous, vibrant modern society, a nation of bullet trains, solar farms, “smart cities,” and transparent government. Central to Modi’s vision is the Clean India Mission—Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. He insists that rapid economic development and raising millions of people out of poverty need not come at the cost of dead rivers and polluted air. So far, however, the most striking feature of his energy policy has been the rapid acceleration of coal mining and of coal-fired power plants. In many cities, the air quality is hazardous, causing half a million premature deaths each year.

Two months after Modi was elected, he announced his most ambitious cleanup initiative: Namami Gange, or Obeisance to the Ganges. As evidence of his capability, Modi points to the western state of Gujarat, where he served as Chief Minister from 2001 to 2014, presiding over impressive economic growth. The Sabarmati River, which flows through Ahmedabad, the largest city in Gujarat, was given an elegant tree-shaded esplanade, where residents now walk their dogs and take the evening air; still, it remains one of the most polluted rivers in India.

Modi is better known for his long association with the radical fringe of Hindu nationalism than for good-government initiatives. Born into a low-caste family (his father sold tea at a railway station), he was just eight years old when he began attending meetings of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the mass organization that is the most aggressive face of Hindu-nationalist ideology. In his twenties, he became a leader of the R.S.S.’s student affiliate, and soon after he befriended another leading activist, Amit Shah, who became his most trusted aide in Gujarat.

In 1990, Modi, already recognized as a future leader of the B.J.P., was one of the main organizers of a protest pilgrimage from Gujarat to the town of Ayodhya, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. According to legend, Ayodhya was the home of the god Rama, and the protesters demanded that a Hindu temple be erected on a site occupied by a sixteenth-century mosque. In 1992, Hindu mobs converged on Ayodhya. They tore down the mosque, prompting nationwide riots, in which two thousand people died. Ten years later, when Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat, Hindu pilgrims made another visit to Ayodhya. As they were returning, Muslim mobs

set their train on fire and fifty-nine people were burned alive. In reprisal, more than a thousand Muslims were killed, while the police stood by. Modi was widely accused of indifference, even of complicity, and, although he was later exonerated by the Supreme Court, he was denied a U.S. visa for a decade.

In 2014, Modi won a landslide election victory. Voters were tired of corruption, and Modi, a charismatic orator and an astute user of social media, promised to eradicate it. The business community clamored for deregulation. Young Indians were desperate for jobs. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty had exhausted its political appeal, and its choice for prime minister, Rahul Gandhi, the grandson of Indira, was a feeble campaigner, no match for Modi's dynamism.

For the most part, Modi did not need to appeal to Hindu-nationalist passions. But his promise to clean up the Ganges plays directly into India's charged religious and caste politics. Two problems are paramount. One is pollution from the tannery industry, which is centered in Kanpur, roughly midway along the river, and is almost entirely Muslim-owned. The other is sewage from Varanasi, two hundred miles downstream—an ancient city, considered the spiritual center of Hinduism, where the river is effectively an open sewer. Both cities are in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which has a population of two hundred and fifteen million and is central to Indian electoral politics. It is also notorious for extreme poverty, rampant corruption, rigid caste divisions, and communal violence, in which most of the victims are Muslims. At least half the mass killings recorded in India in the past quarter century have occurred in Uttar Pradesh.

In 2014, when Modi's ministers began to discuss the Namami Gange project, the details were vague and contradictory. Naturally, the sewers of Varanasi and the tanneries of Kanpur would receive special attention. The Ganges would become a "hub of spiritual tourism," but there was also talk of building dams every sixty miles along the busiest stretch of the river, to facilitate the transport of heavy goods. Four battalions of soldiers would be organized into the Ganga Eco-Task Force. Local communities would join the effort.

Modi has spoken of being inspired by the transformations of the Chicago River and of the Thames, but they are barely a tenth the length of the Ganges. Restoring the Rhine, which is half the length, took almost three decades and cost forty-five billion dollars. The budget for Namami Gange is about three billion dollars over five years.

Modi announced the effort in Varanasi. Like the Ganges, Varanasi (formerly Benares) is said to be immune to degradation, although this is hard to reconcile with the physical reality of the place. The city's labyrinthine alleys are crowded with beggars, widows, and ragged ascetics, corpse bearers and the terminally ill, cows, dogs, monkeys, and motorbikes. A mixture of ornate temples and smoke-shrouded cremation grounds, Varanasi swarms with foreigners drawn by the promise of seeing India at its most exotic—dreadlocked hippies, Israeli kids just released from military service, Japanese tour groups in white surgical masks, stolid American retirees. When I visited, last October, the garbage and the post-monsoon silt lay thick on the ghats, the four-mile stretch of steps and platforms where thousands of pilgrims come each day to take their "holy dip." The low water at the river's edge was a clotted soup of dead flowers, plastic bags, feces, and human ashes.

Cylindrical towers, one emblazoned with an image of Shiva, stood at intervals along the riverfront—sewage-pumping stations that are designed to protect the most sensitive expanse of the bathing ghats, from Assi Ghat, in the south, to Raj Ghat, in the north. R. K. Dwivedi, a stout, sixty-four-year-old man who was in charge of the treatment plants, told me that the pumping stations, which were built in the nineteen-seventies, had recently been upgraded. But less than a third of the sewage that is generated by the 1.5 million people of Varanasi is treated; the rest goes directly into the river.

“From Assi Ghat to Raj Ghat, you will find almost nil flow coming to Ganga,” Dwivedi said. I pointed out that the Assi River, a thirty-foot-wide drainage channel that flows into the Ganges just upstream of Assi Ghat, bypasses the pumping stations and pours raw sewage into the river. Dwivedi said that there was a comprehensive plan to install a sewerage system in the newer, northern half of Varanasi. But the engineers were still struggling with the challenge of laying sewer lines under the tortuous lanes of the old city—a problem that defied the efforts of Dwivedi’s predecessors all the way back to the days of the Raj.

The first concerted attempt to clean the Ganges began in 1986, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched the initial phase of what he called the Ganga Action Plan. He made the announcement on the ghats of Varanasi and focussed on the city’s sewers and the tanneries of Kanpur. The effort was haphazard. Thirty-five sewage-treatment plants were built in the three most populous states along the river—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal—but their capacity was based on the population at the time, and they quickly became obsolete. Moreover, although the central government paid for the plants, municipalities were left to operate them, and often failed to pay the wages or the electricity bills to keep them running.

In 1993, under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, new treatment plants and other pollution-abatement projects were added on several of the river’s larger tributaries. This phase was followed by the creation, in 2009, of the National Ganga River Basin Authority, by the government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. For the next two years, the cleanup was directed by Jairam Ramesh, the environment minister. Ramesh, who is now an opposition member of Parliament, is in his early sixties, with a head of thick gray hair. In many respects, he epitomizes the old Congress Party élite that Modi detests: cosmopolitan, fluent in English, Western-educated, with graduate studies at Carnegie Mellon and M.I.T.

Ramesh told me that he had taken a more comprehensive view of the problem than his predecessors. The unfinished hydropower projects I’d seen in the Himalayas were the result of a Supreme Court decision, which he had strongly supported, to halt construction in the ecologically sensitive headwaters of the river. Ramesh also ordered that the next generation of sewage-treatment plants be based on population estimates for 2025. The central government, in addition to funding plant construction, would bear seventy per cent of the operating and management costs for five years. Several new treatment plants will become operative during Modi’s term, and he will likely take credit for them. Ramesh added that the Prime Minister’s vow to “build more toilets than temples” was his own slogan in 2011. “And Modi attacked me for it,” Ramesh said. “He is shameless.”

I asked Ramesh if he saw anything in the Namami Gange plan that was new. Only one thing, he said: the addition of *Hindutva*, the ideology of “Hindu-ness,” which had cursed India with a poisonous history of communal strife.

As his parliamentary constituency, Modi chose Varanasi. “I feel *Ma Ganga*”—Mother Ganges—“has called me to Varanasi,” he said in 2014. The idea came from Amit Shah, Modi’s campaign manager in Uttar Pradesh and former aide in Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh epitomizes the impoverished heartland of Hindu nationalism, and Shah was given the job of delivering the state to the B.J.P. He is a brilliant and ruthless strategist, and it was an ugly campaign. Modi attacked Arvind Kejriwal, his opponent in Varanasi, as “an agent of Pakistan”—an incendiary charge.

Shah, who in 2013 had reiterated the call for a Rama temple to be built on the site of the demolished mosque in Ayodhya, made no effort to court Muslim voters. Instead, he concentrated on maximizing turnout among lower-caste Hindus, deploying thousands of young R.S.S. volunteers in an unprecedented door-to-door campaign. In the end, Modi took seventy-one of Uttar Pradesh’s eighty parliamentary seats, enough to give him an absolute majority in the lower house of Parliament. Shah was appointed president of the B.J.P.

After this divisive campaign, it was noteworthy that Modi chose Uma Bharti to head a newly created Ministry of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation. Bharti is often referred to as a *sadhvi*, the female equivalent of a *sadhu*, or holy man, and has been a controversial figure throughout her career. A fiery Hindu nationalist, she was a prominent leader of the militants who tore down the mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 and still faces six criminal charges in the Uttar Pradesh courts, including for rioting, unlawful assembly, and “statements intended to cause public mischief.” In a separate case, now before the Supreme Court, she is charged with criminal conspiracy. (Such prosecutions of powerful politicians almost never result in a conviction.)

In 2004, Bharti told reporters that the demolition of what she called “the disputed structure” in Ayodhya was “a victory for the Hindu society.” Later, when an official commission of inquiry accused her of inciting the mob violence, she denied calling for the demolition of the mosque but said, “I am not apologetic at all. I am willing to be hanged for my role.” (Neither Modi nor Bharti agreed to requests for an interview.)

The Hindu nationalists I spoke with in Varanasi—public officials, businessmen, priests, veteran R.S.S. activists—dismissed any criticism of Bharti or Modi. One evening, I climbed a steep flight of steps from the ghats to the tiny Atma Veereshwar Temple, where I met Ravindra Sand, a Saraswat Brahmin priest who is deeply engaged in the religious traditions of Varanasi and the river. He told me, “You can call Modi a rightist, a fundamentalist, an extremist, whatever you want.” What really mattered, he said, was the passion and faith Modi was bringing to the monumental challenges facing India. “He is honest like anything. He sleeps three hours a night. I pray to God for Modi to be the P.M. of India for the next decade, at least.”

When I mentioned the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya and the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat, Sand looked at me as if I were missing the point. “Should I be honest?” he said. “I do not like Muslims at all.” Modi felt the same way, he added. Ayodhya was the home of Lord



Rama, and the Muslims had been the initial aggressors in the Gujarat incident. “If a person can slap you once, and I reply to him with four slaps, you are going to blame me for the fighting? It is not correct. I am sorry to say, these Muslims are not at all comfortable anywhere.”

Such views are expressed openly by mainstream B.J.P. supporters in Uttar Pradesh. “Modi is a devotee—he is determined,” Ramgopal Mohley, the mayor of Varanasi, told me. Namami Gange would leave the ghats spotless; garbage would be trucked to a new waste-to-energy plant; discarded flowers from the cremation grounds would be turned into incense. Like Modi, Mohley had travelled to Japan to scout out ideas in Kyoto, which is home to seventeen UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Like Varanasi, he said, “Kyoto is also a city of narrow lanes and temples. Under their lanes, there are subway lines. Over the lanes, there are flyovers.” He conceded that Varanasi had more lanes and more temples—and, of course, India is not Japan.

I asked Mohley what he thought of Uma Bharti’s appointment. “Everyone loves Uma Bharti,” he said. He declined to say whether Muslims might feel differently, steering the conversation back toward Bharti’s plans for the river. “By October of 2016, you will start seeing the cleanness, up to twenty per cent. In another year, by 2017, you will start seeing the real cleaning.

“*Umaji*,” he added, using the Hindi honorific, “has said that if Ganga is not cleaned in three years’ time she might undertake *samadhi*.” *Samadhi* is commonly defined as a state of deep, spiritual concentration, leading to a sense of oneness with the universe. For some ascetics, my translator added, it involved climbing into a ditch and burying oneself alive.

The next state-government elections in Uttar Pradesh will take place in mid-2017. Modi’s national victory gave him control of the lower house of Parliament, but he does not control the upper house, which is largely elected by state legislatures. Uttar Pradesh is currently ruled by the Samajwadi Party, which has heavy Muslim support.

Modi and Amit Shah launched the campaign on June 13th in Allahabad, at the sacred confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna. The preceding weeks had seen a series of violent skirmishes in the town of Kairana, in western Uttar Pradesh, which evoked unsettling memories of India’s last serious outbreak of communal violence, in 2013. Sixty-five people died on that occasion, and thousands of Muslims sought refuge in Kairana. Now the B.J.P.’s member of Parliament for Kairana claimed that hundreds of Hindus had fled, fearing for their lives. The charge was subsequently discredited, but Shah seized on it in his speech in Allahabad, warning of a mass exodus of Hindus if the Samajwadi Party retained power.

Three weeks later, on July 5th, Modi appointed three new ministers from Uttar Pradesh to his cabinet, a move generally interpreted as an appeal to caste-based voting blocs in next year’s elections. One is a Brahmin, one a member of the “other backward castes,” and the third a *dalit* (the term that has replaced “untouchable”).

Kanpur, with a population of more than three million, is the largest city in Uttar Pradesh and a microcosm of everything that ails urban India. The British once called it “the Manchester of the East,” for its booming textile mills, but these have gone into steady decline, replaced by tanneries, one of the most polluting industries in the world. As in Varanasi, about a fifth of

Kanpur's population is Muslim, but Muslims wield greater political influence here, because the city's tanneries, nearly all Muslim-owned, bring in more than a billion dollars a year in export earnings.

One muggy afternoon in Kanpur, I went down to the Massacre Ghat, which is named for three hundred British women and children who were killed there in 1857, during a rebellion against the reign of the British East India Company, referred to locally as the First War of Independence. The river was a hundred yards from the steps, across a bleak expanse of silt. Raw sewage leaked onto the beach from a drainage channel. Cut off from the river, it had collected in a stagnant, bubbling pool. Groups of children were playing in the shallows of the river, and women clustered in circles at the water's edge, preparing offerings of coconuts, fruit, and marigold garlands.

Kanpur has four hundred and two registered tanneries, which discharge more than two-thirds of their waste into the river. Most are immediately downstream from the Massacre Ghat, in a Muslim neighborhood called Jajmau. In deference to Hindu sensitivities, the slaughter of cows is illegal in Uttar Pradesh. Most of the hides that reach Kanpur's tanneries are from water buffalo; the small number of cowhides are either imported or the result of natural death or roadkill.

Tannery owners in both the poorest and the most lucrative parts of the industry complained bitterly to me that they had been singled out for persecution because they were Muslim. "From the government side, there is nothing but trouble," Hafizurrahman, the owner of the small Hafizurrahman Tannery, in Jajmau, told me. Hafizurrahman, who goes by only one name, has been the president of the Small Tanners Association since 1987; his tannery works with offcuts that are rejected by larger enterprises. A soft-spoken elderly man with a white beard and a suede porkpie hat, he works out of a windowless shed with rough plaster walls. When I met him, flop-eared goats and quarrelsome geese were rooting around on the floor, and the yard was strewn with pieces of dried rawhide that would be turned into chew toys for dogs. A skinny teen-age boy, bare to the waist and glistening with sweat, squelched around in a brick-lined pit, sorting pieces of "wet blue," tinged that color from processing with highly toxic chromium salts, which leaves the leather more supple than the older, vegetable-processing method.

Hafizurrahman conceded that the tanneries do foul the Ganges, but said that the real culprits are corrupt state and city authorities. In 1994, when the city government opened a central plant to treat the tannery waste, tannery owners had to contribute part of the cost. Then the construction budget tripled and, with it, their contribution. "There were only a hundred and seventy-five tanneries at that time," he said. "But then another two hundred and twenty-seven came up—and the government asked them to pay again. But it never upgraded the plant. They just took the money."

In 2014, the Council on Foreign Relations named India's judiciary, police, and political parties the three most corrupt institutions in the country. Local officials commonly skim off a substantial percentage of the fee paid to private contractors working on public-service projects, such as water supply, electricity, and sewage treatment. "It's almost legal," Rakesh Jaiswal, the head of EcoFriends, a small environmental group in Kanpur, said. "If it's thirty or forty per cent, it's not corruption—it's more like a right. Sometimes all the money is pocketed by the authorities, a

hundred per cent, and the work takes place only on paper.” I asked if things had improved under Modi, and he shook his head. “Not even one per cent has changed,” he said.

Taj Alam, the president of the Uttar Pradesh Leather Industry Association, had another complaint. Alam’s tannery, Kings International, makes high-end saddlery for export; situated in Unnao, a small town a dozen miles from Kanpur, it is surrounded by manicured gardens and walls draped with bougainvillea. In his ornate, air-conditioned office, Alam noted that the government shuts down the tanneries each year, sometimes for several weeks, to avoid polluting the river during India’s greatest religious celebration, the Hindu bathing festival at Allahabad, a hundred and thirty miles downstream. This costs the industry tens of millions of dollars, Alam said. “But you have ten million people shitting in the river, urinating there, throwing stuff on the ghats. The tanning sector is maybe 99.99 per cent Muslim. Tell me, has the government imposed any treatment-plant order on any other industry?”

Alam told me that he was worried about next year’s state elections. “If there’s a B.J.P. state government, they can do whatever they want,” he said. “When someone has an absolute majority, it can be misused. And it *is* being misused.”

Cleaning up the tanneries of Kanpur has proved just as intractable a problem as cleaning up the sewers of Varanasi. I spent a day in the tannery district with Rakesh Jaiswal, the head of EcoFriends, touring the evidence. Jaiswal, who founded the organization in 1993, is in his late fifties, and has silvery hair and a courtly manner. We stopped at a cleared plot of land about a quarter of a mile from the river, where the detritus of the leather industry was heaped in large piles. Some were offcuts of wet blue. Others were made up of scraps of hide with hair and bits of flesh still attached, surrounded by clouds of buzzing flies. A laborer was hacking at the muck with a three-tined pitchfork. When he was done, it would be sold to make chicken feed and glue. Nearby, an open drain carried a stream of tannery waste down a gentle slope to the Ganges. The odor suggested a mixture of decomposing animal matter, battery acid, and burned hair.

In 1998, Jaiswal brought a lawsuit against the central government and a number of polluting industries, and a hundred and twenty-seven tanneries were closed. Many were allowed to reopen after installing a primary-treatment plant, but Jaiswal told me that the levels of chromium pollution in tannery wastewater were still as much as eighty times above the legal limit, suggesting that the plant owners were not spending the money to operate them, and that the new regulations were only spottily enforced. From the tanneries, the wastewater is pumped to a central treatment facility, which was built in 1994. At the plant, sewage and tannery waste are combined in a ratio of three to one. After treatment, the mixture is used for irrigation. The plant handles nine million litres of tannery waste a day, barely a third of what the industry generates. When I asked the project engineer why the plant had never been upgraded, he shrugged.

Later, I drove with Jaiswal to the outskirts of Kanpur, to see the irrigation canal. It ran along an elevated berm where workers had spread out hides to dry in the sun. The treated mixture of sewage and tannery waste came gushing out of two rusted outflow pipes and made its way down the canal at a fair clip. In 1999, Jaiswal conducted a study of contamination in the villages that were using this water for irrigation; his samples revealed dangerous levels of chromium in

agricultural produce and in milk. I asked Jaiswal if the situation had improved since then. “The quality of the water is the same,” he said.

The success of Modi’s cleanup effort will ultimately depend not on Uma Bharti, or even on Modi, but on less visible bureaucrats such as Shashi Shekhar, the water-resources secretary in Bharti’s ministry, who is charged with carrying out Namami Gange. Shekhar, who is in his late fifties, was trained as an earth scientist. Before assuming his current post, last year, he was the head of the Central Pollution Control Board, a national agency that is respected for its professionalism but is frequently unable to enforce the standards that it sets, because the state-level agencies responsible for meeting them are typically corrupt or incompetent.

When I went to see Shekhar in his office in New Delhi last fall, he walked me through a PowerPoint presentation that he was about to deliver to the cabinet. It served as a reminder that Modi is not only an ideologue but a demanding chief executive. In 2015, India recorded a growth rate of 7.5 per cent, overtaking China. In September, during a weekend visit to Silicon Valley, Modi won commitments from the C.E.O.s of Google and Microsoft—Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella, respectively, both Indian-born—to help bring Internet access to villages and to install high-speed Wi-Fi in the country’s railway stations. (India has the world’s second-largest Internet market but the slowest average connection speeds in Asia.) He has also introduced programs designed to make the government more accountable to the public, such as PRAGATI, a videoconference platform where Modi grills government officials on citizens’ complaints about bureaucracy, corruption, delays in executing public-works projects, and other issues.

“The P.M. is very particular about making the system efficient, accountable, and sustainable,” Shekhar said. He acknowledged that the cleanup campaign had got off to a slow start, but said that his ministry was setting a series of deadlines that would soon begin to show tangible results. He had been in Kanpur just after I left, and he said there was now a more coherent plan for cleaning up the city’s tanning industry. This included an order that each tannery install sensors to measure its discharge. Several lawsuits are also under way, including one before the Supreme Court, that could close down tanneries that exceed official pollution limits—although, as Rakesh Jaiswal noted, this has been done before, to little lasting effect.

Shekhar had also proposed a “paradigm shift” in the approach to sewage treatment. Despite the efforts of the previous government, sixty per cent of the treatment plants along the river were still either shut down or not operating to capacity, and ninety per cent failed to meet prescribed standards. Too much responsibility remained in the hands of corrupt local officials and contractors. Now the contractors would be paid only after they’d done the work. Otherwise, Shekhar said, “we found that the fellow does not put his skin into it.”

Major corporations had agreed to clean the surface of the river with trash-skimming machines and booms. The Tata Group, India’s largest conglomerate, would take on the stretch of river in Varanasi. Shekhar also planned to build communal toilets in some of the poorest riverside villages. Women were especially keen on this idea, he said, since, for privacy, they customarily go out into the fields in the pre-dawn dark or after the evening meal, when they are vulnerable to snakebite and sexual assault.

Some elements of the cleanup shouldn't be difficult to execute. Sewage-treatment plants that are already under construction will be completed. Recently, Shekhar e-mailed me to say that work on cleaning the ghats in Varanasi, Kanpur, and Allahabad had begun on schedule; for a company with Tata's resources, this is not a particularly challenging assignment. Shekhar also said that the government had spelled out the terms of what it called a "hybrid annuity" plan for payments to contractors working on the new sewage-treatment plants and other public-works projects. But will tinkering with financial incentives truly reduce bureaucracy and corruption, especially in parts of the country where state authorities aren't under the control of Modi's political party?

Modi's greatest asset may be his conviction that he can inspire change through sheer dynamism. But this may also be his biggest liability. "The expectation is so huge," Shekhar said. "Even bureaucrats have the perception of him as Superman."

Shekhar acknowledged that Namami Gange would not fully restore the river. The hydropower dam at Tehri would remain, as would the nineteenth-century diversion canals. In lower stretches of the river, where the flow is already severely depleted, it will take decades to address the inefficient use of water for irrigation. Even so, he said, "never in the past has a government initiated a project of this magnitude. I am putting myself under great pressure as far as targets are concerned. But if you do not see high, you do not reach midway."

Early one morning in Varanasi, I went down to Assi Ghat to meet Navneet Raman, the chairman of the Benares Cultural Foundation and the scion of a family that traces its ancestry back to the finance minister of a sixteenth-century Afghan king. Raman is an environmentalist on a modest scale, planting trees and offering to compost the flowers left by worshippers at the Golden Temple, the most important temple in the city—an offer that the priests had declined.

We hailed a boatman to row us across to the east bank of the Ganges. It is considered to be an inauspicious place; anyone unlucky enough to die there will be reincarnated as an ass. As we pulled away from the steps, the rising sun flooded the curving waterfront of ghats, temples, and palaces. When we arrived at the other side, Raman reached into a bag and scooped out a handful of shiny purple seeds the size of pistachios. They were seeds of the tropical almond, *Terminalia catappa*, and would grow into what is known locally as "the sewage tree," because it can filter heavy metals and other pollutants out of standing water. We walked along a narrow strip of scrubland, above the flood line, scattering the seeds left and right.

"Most people come to Benares to pay last respects to the memory of their near and dear ones who have passed away," Raman said. "So I thought that on this bank of the river we could make a forest of remembrance. This is my guerrilla warfare. I am not doing it for Mr. Modi." Raman imagined leafy gardens and walkways, and benches where families could sit and look across the river at the beauty of the temples and the ghats. But he acknowledged that this vision lay far in the future.

I asked him if he ever grew discouraged by the slow pace of change. He shrugged and said that all he could do was place his trust in Shiva. "India is a land of discouragement," he said. "If you're not discouraged by the harsh summers, then you are discouraged by the cow eating your plant, or the motorbike or tractor or car that is running over your plant, or the neighbor who is

plucking the leaves from it just for fun as he is going by. If you can't deal with discouragement, India has no place for you.”

*Reporting for this piece was facilitated by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.*

George Black is writing a book on the history and the culture of the Ganges.

*This article appears in other versions of the July 25, 2016, issue, with the headline “Purifying the Goddess.”*

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/25/what-it-takes-to-clean-the-ganges>

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**July 28, 2016**

Living Green

By Kathryn McKenzie, Living Green  
Santa Cruz Sentinel

*Monterey Bishop Richard J. Garcia in June wrote a letter to priests and deacons within the Diocese of Monterey, calling on the 34 churches within the diocese to live the words set down by Pope Francis, above, whose 2015 encyclical, Laudato Si, urges humankind to act now to save the earth.*

The latest group to rally for green living may be surprising to you but makes perfect sense when you look at the big picture.

Catholic churches throughout Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties are now rallying against climate change, and have joined hands with an environmental nonprofit to reduce their parishes' carbon footprints.

This past June, Bishop Richard J. Garcia wrote a letter to priests and deacons within the Diocese of Monterey, calling on the 34 churches within the diocese to live the words set down by Pope Francis, whose 2015 encyclical, Laudato Si, urges humankind to act now to save the earth.

Pope Francis's revolutionary encyclical acknowledged that global warming and climate change are real, and that humans are the cause. He also asserted that the poor are already suffering the most from the impacts of climate change, making this not just an environmental issue, but “an issue of justice,” writes Garcia.

The diocese launched its church-based environmental program two weeks ago with a gathering of church leaders, who were introduced to the Romero Institute, a faith-based nonprofit law and policy center that is the diocese's partner in this venture. The Santa Cruz-based Romero Institute is on the steering committee of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, the group that was

instrumental in getting 1.8 million signatures, including the pope's, to the Paris climate change talks last year.

Green Power, a subsidiary of the Romero Institute, is working with local Catholic churches to train and advise parish Green Teams on steps they can take to reduce their parish's carbon footprint.

Deacon Warren Hoy, director of family life and social justice ministries for the Monterey Diocese, says the recent gathering gave church leaders the tools they need to fight climate change.

"We're very excited about partnering with the Romero Institute's Green Power team to help 'green' our church," said Hoy. "The July 17 gathering at Resurrection Church in Aptos is a direct response to Pope Francis' call to love and care for our planetary home."

Parishioners and the parishes alike will be aided in lowering their electricity consumption, living more simply and sustainably, and moving toward the use of renewable energy, Garcia writes: "Lowering carbon levels is now imperative to protect the earth."

After a parish has reduced its power usage, Green Power will help guide the parish toward use of renewable energy sources like solar power. Parishioners will be able to learn about Community Choice Energy, a locally controlled alternative to the monopoly utility model for counties and cities to provide electricity to their citizens.

Monterey Bay Community Power is the consortium of county and city officials spearheading the creation of a Monterey region community choice program, which could begin serving up to 21 municipalities by summer 2017. An outreach partner of MBCP, Green Power is working with the diocese to educate Catholics about Community Choice.

Given that nearly 32 percent of citizens living in the tri-county region are Catholic, Daniel Sheehan, president of Green Power and the Romero Institute, is hopeful that the collaboration with the diocese will substantially lower greenhouse gas emissions.

"The Diocese of Monterey is taking a major step forward by engaging both the lifestyle and policy fronts of the climate problem," says Sheehan. "Parishes going green and educating Catholics about Community Choice Energy is a sophisticated, bold way to mitigate global warming."

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/environment-and-nature/20160728/living-green>

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**July 30, 2016**

Vatican Gardens' gruesome past grows into green haven

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

Vatican City -- Today's lush and immaculately manicured Vatican Gardens were once just a sprawl of mosquito-infested swamps, clay hillsides and hardy grape vines.

The wild, unpopulated landscape on the fringes of early Rome slowly shifted as it changed to accommodate historical events over the course of 2,000 years: the martyrdom and burial of St. Peter; the blossoming of Christianity; the growth of papal power; and the eventual establishment of the world's smallest sovereign nation.

The gardens make up almost half of Vatican City State's 109 acres and their colorful evolution is documented in a newly updated volume: *A Guide to the Vatican Gardens: History, Art, Nature*, curated by historians and experts from the Vatican Library and Vatican Museums. Illustrated with full-color photographs and historic black and white engravings, the book has been translated into English.

In the first century AD, the Roman Emperor Caligula set up a circus for chariot racing near a villa his mother, Agrippina, had built in the area, which was still far on the outskirts of ancient Rome. Shipping over a red granite obelisk from Egypt, he decorated the circus with the monument, which now stands in the center of St. Peter's Square.

Emperor Nero expanded the circus, using it to showcase his cruelty against Christians like burning them alive to light his evening parties on the hill's gardens and crucifying others, like St. Peter, who was then buried in a roadside cemetery nearby.

As the apostle's tomb became a place of worship, the "circus fell into disrepair, Agrippina's villa decayed and the uninhabited hill returned to wild scrub," wrote the book's co-author, Ambrogio Piazzoni, vice prefect of the Vatican Library.

After Emperor Constantine converted and granted Christians the freedom to practice their faith, he ordered the construction of the first basilica dedicated to St. Peter, which meant razing part of the hill and covering over part of the cemetery.

A few small buildings were constructed nearby over the next four centuries including a monastery, but the popes -- the successors of Peter -- didn't start living in this "rustic and unprotected location" by the basilica until the fifth century, Piazzoni wrote.

With the Saracen Raid in 846, Pope Leo IV constructed a fortified wall to defend the Vatican area from marauders. Inside the walls, there were meadows, vegetable gardens, orchards and vineyards while outside -- which is part of today's gardens -- were more pastures and woods.

Once popes started residing permanently at the Vatican, they added their own personal touches to the vast expanse of greenery surrounding them.



Pope Nicholas IV had his doctor, Simon of Genoa, cultivate medicinal plants and aromatic herbs in the tradition of the Benedictine monks, who were known for creating treatments for illnesses and distilled liqueurs and tinctures.

This 13th-century papal initiative was to become the oldest botanical garden in Italy and marked the beginning of the formal scientific study of botany as a branch of medicine, "predating by centuries the teaching of botany" in academies and universities, Piazzoni wrote.

Pope Pius V made sure the medicinal plant studies continued in the 16th-century by hiring a Tuscan botanist and geologist to take care of the gardens. The pope gave him the title of "medicinal plant expert of Our Lord" and furnished him with a "safe conduct pass" allowing him to travel anywhere in search of rare plants.

The Vatican medicinal garden gradually lost importance -- becoming a humble lawn -- after Pope Alexander VII built a newer and larger botanical garden, which is still one of the largest in Italy, along the Janiculum hill in 1660. The Vatican lost that and many other properties after the loss of the Papal States in 1870.

Given the variety of habitat and papal proclivities at the time, the Vatican Gardens were also home to a menagerie of wild animals including the brief upkeep of a leopard during the pontificate of Boniface VIII in the 13th century and Hanno, the elephant, which was a gift to Pope Leo X from Portugal's king in 1514.

Pope Pius XII found an injured finch in the Vatican Gardens and nursed her back to health. "Gretchen," the finch, would keep the pope company and sit on his shoulder at mealtime while hopping down to peck at crumbs.

Today, green parrots nesting in palm trees and a small sampling of cats are the only free-range fauna easily sighted in the Vatican Gardens.

The gardens went largely unchanged from its Renaissance heyday at the end of the 1500s to the end of the 1900s, primarily, Piazzoni wrote, because the popes had moved their main residence to the Quirinale Palace -- judging it to be "more comfortable, functional and situated in a sunny and healthy place."

Despite the disuse, the gardens were still cared for and embellished with additional fountains, shrines, statues and exotic or rare plant life.

With the end of the Papal States, the pope moved back to the papal residence at the Vatican.

Being largely confined to the small property, Pope Leo XIII spent a lot of time caring for the gardens and pursuing his love for hunting and viticulture. He reportedly tended his small vineyard himself, hoeing out the weeds, and visiting often for moments of prayer and writing poetry. He had a papal guard on duty with orders to shoot to scare off birds threatening his grape harvest.

Modern-day popes still use the gardens for exercise, restful relaxation and meditation. Retired Pope Benedict XVI takes his daily walk there, praying the rosary along the wooded paths.

Not just for popes anymore, the gardens were opened to the public several years ago as part of an organized tour either on foot or on an environmentally friendly open bus.

The tours highlight the gardens' blend of art, nature and faith, but also help visitors sense what the book describes as the harmonious co-existence of so many species of flora and fauna, which "reinforce the ideals that constitute the universal mission of this extraordinary place" -- the love and care for God's creation.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/marshy-manicured-vatican-gardens-gruesome-past-grows-green-haven>

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**July 30, 2016**

John Ahni Schertow shines a spotlight on indigenous resistance

By Stephyn Quirke  
Street Roots News

Indigenous peoples' struggles go unseen by much of the world. IC Magazine's editor is working to change that.

On June 30, Carol Linnitt of the online news magazine DeSmog Canada reported that a controversial crude oil pipeline had just been defeated in British Columbia, writing "Enbridge Northern Gateway: 'First Nations Save Us Again.'"

[Linnitt's observations on First Nations](#) apply with equal force south of the border:

"That these unique traditional cultures and ways of life have survived the onslaught of Western, industrial, imperial and racist governments and policies in this province is extraordinary.

"That these communities, these individuals, have preserved a cherished, land-based way of life that seems in part the antidote to the poisonous, destructive and extractive impulse of modernity — all while fighting precedent-setting court cases to maintain their right to that life — is extraordinary."

And the victories of these land-based communities do not end with the Northern Gateway pipeline.

A proposal for the largest coal export terminal in the U.S. was soundly defeated by the Lummi Nation in May. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission stopped another proposed coal export terminal in Boardman, Ore., in 2014. In 2013, the Confederated Tribes of the

Umatilla stopped massive tar sands “megaload” trucks from crossing their territory en route to mine the Alberta tar sands – the most destructive industrial project on Earth. And since June, the Yakama Nation has led a local response to the fiery oil train derailment in Mosier, Ore.; in a June 9 news conference, Chairman JoDe Goudy called for a moratorium on all fossil fuel shipments in the Columbia River Gorge.

Combine all that with their decades-long fight to protect and restore salmon habitat, and it quickly becomes clear that the original peoples of the Northwest have always fought hard to protect it. This same dynamic holds true across the globe: indigenous nations everywhere are on the front lines of struggles to protect the environment, constantly facing down threats to their food and water, even when their lives are being threatened.

Many of these struggles go unseen by urban populations in the First World. But some are working tirelessly to change that.

John Ahni Schertow is a Two-Spirit of Haudenosaunee and European descent. Two Spirit is the term used to describe mix-gender members of indigenous North American communities. Twelve years ago, Schertow founded [Intercontinental Cry](#), or IC, as a website to share information on indigenous struggles across the globe. Today, the independent, investigative news magazine boasts almost 30,000 regular online followers, a print magazine edition, and a sponsorship from the Center for World Indigenous Studies.

In 2012, IC published a piece by Kahnawake-based Mohawk writer Russell Diabo that helped launch the Idle No More movement. Its recent coverage has included logging blockades in southern Oregon’s Klamath territory and indigenous women fighting fracking in Argentina. Altogether, the network covers the frontline struggles of more than 630 indigenous nations worldwide.

Street Roots contacted chief editor Schertow to learn about the future of IC, what stories need to be covered, and how news organizations can better serve indigenous nations – now numbering more than 5,000.

***Stephen Quirke:** Your journalists often seem to cover conflict situations. Is this dangerous work?*

**John Schertow:** It’s life and death. When a journalist enters a conflict zone, they instantly become a target, and so they have to be extremely careful on the ground and on the internet. It’s even more risky for our contributors because we don’t have the funds to support them. Earlier this year, one of our writers was raped while out in the field, and we couldn’t do a thing to support her.

***S.Q.:** You’re currently collaborating with the Indigenous Environmental Network on a project called *Keep It in the Ground*. What’s the goal of this project? How do you approach this kind of collaboration?*

**J.S.:** Keep It in the Ground is a pretty decentralized movement that's open to anyone who supports the idea that when the cost of extraction outweighs the supposed benefits, the resources need to be left alone. Our collaboration with IEN focuses on making sure that the needs, rights and voices of indigenous peoples who are taking a stand against extraction aren't being completely drowned out by narratives that non-indigenous groups are pushing forward. Neither of us have collaborated on a project like this before, so we're pretty much making it up as we go along, telling stories that need to be told, filling in holes that other media outlets don't notice, and making videos so we can ensure that the public gets the full picture.

*S.Q.: How would you evaluate global efforts to address climate change? Are we making headway?*

**J.S.:** It really depends on what you mean by "we." REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degredation), the carbon market mechanism that the U.N. is pushing forward, is completely useless. In point of fact, it's a Ponzi scheme that states, corporations, investment banks and U.N.-recognized nonprofits are using to make some serious coin at the expense of indigenous rights and the environment. In Panama, for example, the Honduran company Genisa is being awarded a bunch of "carbon credits" for constructing a new hydro-dam on the Tabasara River, within the traditional territory of the Ngabe-Bugle Peoples. The Ngabe are literally being drowned out of their land; they're losing everything so that some other company can "spend" those carbon credits. And for what? It's well known that hydro-dams drive climate change and cause excessive levels of methylmercury to collect in the flood area, which is a huge threat to the entire region. In other words, they're making climate change worse. There's a good documentary called "The Carbon Rush" that looks closer at this.

Global civil society is doing what it can to mitigate this abusive exploitation of climate change – and locally, there are a lot of fantastic projects led by eco-villages and by indigenous communities that aim to be carbon neutral and carbon negative. Some states like Germany are also making great strides to get away from the fossil fuel industry, the single greatest climate change driver, but it's one step forward, five steps back at this point, especially now that so many big NGOs are compromising themselves to collaborate with states and corporations.

*S.Q.: How do you see the role of indigenous nations in stabilizing the climate and winding down resource extraction?*

**J.S.:** Indigenous nations are primary stakeholders in every sense. Even though they contribute the least to climate change, they are being hit the hardest by it. Many coastal communities are already being displaced because of rising ocean levels. More inland rivers and lakes are disappearing, fish populations are dying off, and weather patterns are gradually becoming more extreme. It's the same thing with resource extraction. Indigenous lands, cultures and economies are being obliterated. And what do they get out of it? A few short-term jobs, a new sportsplex, and 10,000 years of pollution.

Indigenous peoples are the frontline of the environmental movement. It is imperative that we start recognizing this. But beyond these impacts lies the fact that indigenous peoples are a political powerhouse that states and corporations can't conquer, even at the point of a gun.

Former Peruvian President Alan Garcia learned that the hard way in 2009 when he tried to push through legislation that would open up legally protected indigenous lands to industry. More than 2,000 indigenous communities organized a “minga,” a permanent collective mobilization for the greater good. When all was said and done, the offending laws were tossed out and Garcia retired in disgrace. That’s just one among thousands of other environmental wins that were only possible because indigenous peoples were front and center. Indigenous peoples are the frontline of the environmental movement. It is imperative that we start recognizing this.

*S.Q.: Have states been willing to take leadership from indigenous nations? Are there any success stories here?*

**J.S.:** Not on the international level. Indigenous nations are being completely ignored, unless, like many NGOs, they’re willing to go along with the interests of states and corporations. But on the state level, there are some positive moves. The U.S. government, for example, worked with the Lower Elwha Klallam Nation to remove hydro-dams on their ancestral territory, and there are a lot of new tribal parks popping up in Canada and Australia. It’s a good start, but we really need more moves like this.

*S.Q.: This past June, you published a story from Elizabeth Walsh titled “[To Combat Climate Change, Restore Land Ownership to Indigenous Peoples.](#)” Can you briefly summarize her argument for our readers?*

**J.S.:** Elizabeth’s central point was that indigenous peoples are, by and large, better environmental stewards than states and corporations, a point that’s made evident by the fact that indigenous peoples are currently protecting 95 percent of the world’s most threatened biodiversity. She also argued – and rightly so – that indigenous rights are more effective at protecting the environment than any environmental policies and laws that states push forward. On top of that, indigenous peoples are much stronger politically than non-governmental organizations. They can protect their rights far better than any NGO, even if that nation’s land rights aren’t officially recognized.

*S.Q.: Walsh also mentions the concept of bio-cultural rights, [which IC covered last September](#). Do you think this framework can help civil society to appreciate and safeguard indigenous rights?*

**J.S.:** Without question. And that’s why the concept of bio-cultural rights is finally starting to get some serious attention. Right now we tend to look at indigenous rights as lesser-human rights. They’re individual objects in a controlled political landscape that, like human rights, states can push, pull, erase, ignore, and turn inside out to suit their agendas. However, bio-cultural rights are an ecosystem of rights that ties indigenous cultures, identities, languages and subsistence economies—indigenous rights – to the very lands that all indigenous nations depend on. In this framework, you can’t remove or erase any one right because it would have a cascade effect that could even cause that ecosystem to collapse. This is why so many indigenous nations oppose resource extraction. As the old saying goes, without the land there is no people; when the people suffer, that land also suffers; and when the people thrive, the land thrives with them. Incidentally,

this is also why so many mining companies are forced to call off their government-sanctioned resource raids. The ecosystem collapse we're talking about here is tantamount to genocide.

*S.Q.: You've recently called on media outlets to use "triage" in choosing stories so that our most vulnerable populations are not ignored while editors pursue entertainment stories. Why is this important? How does IC engage in this process?*

**J.S.:** Great question. When we get right down to it, a lot of us take journalism for granted. For many journalists, for example, it's just a job or a weekend hobby. And we don't really have any guidelines or any regard for priorities when it comes to the stories we choose to take on. We're driven by passions and paychecks. And for a variety of different reasons, that driving force never seems to include indigenous peoples like the Ngabe, who are struggling for their lives. Editors don't usually care either. They would rather cover Trump or anything else that's trending so they can build their readership or generate more ad revenue.

It's embarrassing and shameful to me. Hobby or no, journalists are public servants who have a direct impact on the places, the events and the people they cover in their stories. For that reason, I believe we have an ethical responsibility to tell the stories that need to be told, regardless of our opinions and preferences. IC operates on this principle. Before we take something on, we consider how many times the story has been covered and what the quality of that coverage is. We investigate whether or not there is a threat – and if there is, we explore the depth of that threat and how we might be able to support the best possible outcome. We break it all down, and if in the end we find a space to contribute something meaningful and authentic, we get to work.

*S.Q.: Are indigenous peoples harmed by a lack of fair media coverage?*

**J.S.:** To be blunt, yes. As the old saying goes, "Silence equals consent." By failing to cover the abuses that indigenous peoples face, the media is lending support to the perpetrators behind those abuses. They're also preventing indigenous peoples from developing a capacity to effectively organize around threats, and they're obstructing our right to know about those threats. If that's not bad enough, the media's negligence perpetuates prevailing stereotypes surrounding indigenous peoples, especially given the amount of racism that editors push out online and in print.

*S.Q.: What can be done to resolve this?*

**J.S.:** There's no easy solution to this unfortunately. I mean, we could physically occupy the media – including alternative media – until they agree to a set of terms that could include, for example, a "minimum coverage standard," but beyond that, we really just have to start demanding better of our favorite news outlets. We also need to start leading by example, which is exactly what we're trying to do through IC Magazine.

*S.Q.: According to Global Witness, [2015 was the deadliest year on record](#) for environmental defenders. How does IC bring attention to this violence? What is driving it?*

**J.S.:** You might say that we're in the middle of a psychotic fire sale. Everything must go before it's gone. And, if someone's getting in the way of that glorious mission to get that gold or that oil or that molybdenum, well, they need to be neutralized. That's pretty much all there is to it.

Our own resources are extremely limited, so we can't do as much as we should be doing, but we're telling every story that we can with the goal of educating the public and providing journalistic support to the frontlines that others ignore. Somebody's gotta do it.

*S.Q.: What can people do to help?*

Clicking "like" on Facebook or signing an online petition, while admirable, doesn't accomplish anything on the ground. We need to go to protests, volunteer our time, donate strategically – when we can afford to donate – to those who need it, host film screenings, start our own debate clubs, confront racism when we encounter it, and do anything else that might make a real difference in the world. **J.S.:** Aside from educating ourselves, it would be great if we all became more active in our own communities and in solidarity with all indigenous peoples. Clicking "like" on Facebook or signing an online petition, while admirable, doesn't accomplish anything on the ground. We need to go to protests, volunteer our time, donate strategically – when we can afford to donate – to those who need it, host film screenings, start our own debate clubs, confront racism when we encounter it, and do anything else that might make a real difference in the world.

*S.Q.: What are some of the challenges at IC?*

**J.S.:** Funding has been a massive challenge for us. Despite the fact that we run circles around many other media outlets in terms of scope, we've never been able to secure a single grant or get support from any private foundation in Canada or the U.S. We've also had a big problem finding trustworthy volunteers to help share the burden, so to speak. Plus, journalists aren't usually willing to work for free, so we're forced to skip a lot of important stories.

*S.Q.: Are you currently recruiting more writers? Where do you need them the most?*

**J.S.:** We're always looking for more writers, no matter where they are in the world. They just have to be cool with the fact that we are not your average media outlet. We are ethical to the core, we deeply respect those we work with, we don't abuse words and we don't compromise.

*S.Q.: What's next for IC?*

**J.S.:** We've got tons of great stuff going on. We're working with the Indigenous Governance Program (IGOV) at the University of Victoria to publish a magazine called "Everyday Acts of Resurgence." We're developing an online cultural exchange to support indigenous youth on reserve. We're designing an online "indigenous journalism" course and an "ethical journalist" checklist. We're also searching frantically for operational funds so that we can carry this work forward, start paying our staff, expand our coverage and fairly compensate our contributors. We got a lot of work ahead of us.

## August 2016

A successful provocation for a pluralistic global society

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* – A Magna Carta of integral ecology as a reaction to humanity's self-destructive course

By Christoph Bals  
Germanwatch

<http://germanwatch.org/en/download/16099.pdf>

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## August 2016

Liberation Ecology: Interview with Leonardo Boff

Great Transition Initiative

*Theology can play a central role in defining the moral fiber of a society, including its commitment to poverty alleviation and stewardship of Earth. [Allen White](#), Senior Fellow at Tellus Institute, talks with [Leonardo Boff](#), a founder of liberation theology, about the origins of the movement and the vital connections between ecology and social justice.*

**Half a century ago, you were among a small group of theologians who were instrumental in conceptualizing liberation theology. What spurred this synthesis of thought and action that challenged the orthodoxy of both Church and State?**

Liberation theology is not a discipline. It is a different way of practicing theology. It does not start from existing theological traditions and then focus on the poor and excluded populations of society. Its core is the struggle of the poor to free themselves from the conditions of poverty. Liberation theology does not seek to act *for* the poor via welfarism or paternalism. Instead, it seeks to act *with* the poor to tap their wisdom in changing their life and livelihood.

How, then, do we act with them? By seeing the poor and oppressed through their own eyes, not with those of an outsider. We must discover and understand their values, such as solidarity and the joy of living, which to some extent have been lost by society's privileged. Some of those who subscribe to liberation theology choose to live like the poor, sharing life in the slums and participating in residents' organizations and projects. This method can be described as "see, judge, act, and celebrate." Seeing the reality of the poor firsthand awakens an outsider to the inadequacy of his perceptions and doctrines for judging it and how to change it. This occurs in two ways: first, through understanding the mechanisms that generate poverty and, second, by



awakening to the fact that poverty and oppression contradict God's plan and that actions must thus be taken to eliminate them.

### **How does this understanding and awakening manifest itself?**

Following understanding and awakening is action: How can we work with the poor to end oppression and achieve social justice? The opposite of poverty is not wealth but justice. This commitment to action spurred the birth of thousands of ecclesiastical communities, Bible circles, and centers for the defense of human rights, all focused on the rights of the poor, the landless, and the homeless, and the advancement of people of African descent, the indigenous, women, and other marginalized groups. These expressions of liberation theology are not rooted in rituals, but rather in the celebration of life and its victories in light of the Gospel. This approach is visible in the words and actions of Pope Francis, particularly in his encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. This style of theology has created a type of priest and religious life that unites faith and social commitment to the poor and welcomes all who wish to participate. This method of living and thinking faith has helped the Church to better understand the reality of the poor and to shift away from doctrines and rituals. The Church of Liberation helped found political parties such as the Workers' Party of former president Lula in Brazil that embody the commitment to social change that Jesus viewed as essential to a more just and fraternal society. This kind of thinking encouraged Latin American countries to introduce social policies that embraced millions of people who previously lived on the margins and in misery.

### **What led you to such social activism?**

What drove my commitment to social change was my work in the slums of Brazil. The poor were our teachers and doctors. They challenged us to answer the question, how can our Christian faith inspire us to look for a different, more just world where brotherhood and sisterhood are deeper and richer and love is made easier? It was not the politics and works of Karl Marx, Johann Baptist Metz, or Jürgen Moltmann that inspired us to get close to the poor. Marx was neither father nor godfather of liberation theology, though he has helped us in fundamental ways. He showed how poverty results from the way society is organized to exploit and oppress the weakest among us, and he called attention to the fact that the ruling classes, in conjunction with certain segments of the Church, manipulated the Christian faith to be a source of passivity rather than a force for indignation, resistance, and liberation.

### **In the 1950s and 1960s, liberation theology took root most deeply in Latin America, especially in Brazil. Why this region, and why this country?**

The Church in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s was unique in Latin America and, I would say, even the world. We had many prophetic bishops who opposed the military dictatorships, denounced torture, and publicly defended human rights. Thanks to the great Bishop Hélder Câmara, a coordinated pastoral meeting was organized for the first time. It involved more than 300 bishops and led to the creation of the National Conference of Bishops, which, in turn, developed strategies for social change that became widely adopted. For a long time, the Conference advocated for basic social justice and agrarian reform.

This initiative led to a shift away from the concept of “development of underdevelopment,” which draws attention to the historic and structural roots of underdevelopment, to a focus on the process of liberation. The educator Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, helped to shape the minds of bishops, theologians, and pastors. It marked the beginning in Brazil, and soon Peru, of liberation theology as a foundational concept in the Catholic Church.

**In 2009, you wrote that “everyone must be freed from this system that has continued for three centuries and has been imposed across the planet.” What is the “system,” and what makes escape so urgent?**

Every modern society is indebted to the founding fathers of the Enlightenment worldview beginning in the seventeenth century with Descartes, Newton, Bacon, and others. Together, their work gave rise to the idea of conquest of people and the Earth. The Earth was no longer viewed as the great Mother, alive and purposeful. Instead, it was reduced to something to be exploited by humans for wealth accumulation. In the capitalist system that emerged out of this, value is ascribed to accumulated capital rather than to work, now simply a vehicle for such accumulation. This system creates vast economic inequalities as well as political, social, and ethnic injustices. Its political manifestation is liberal democracy, in which freedom is equated with the freedom to exploit nature and accumulate wealth. This system has been imposed worldwide and has created a culture of limitless private accumulation and consumption. Today, we realize that a finite Earth cannot support endless growth that overshoots the Earth’s biophysical limits and threatens long-term human survival and Mother Earth’s bounty.

**Your recent writings suggest that ecology should be an additional pillar of the movement. What is the connection between ecology and social justice?**

The core of liberation theology is the empowerment of the poor to end poverty and achieve the freedom to live a good life. In the 1980s, we realized that the logic supporting exploitation of workers was the same as that supporting the exploitation of the earth. Out of this insight, a vigorous liberation eco-theology was born. To make this movement effective, it is important to create a new paradigm rooted in cosmology, biology, and complexity theory. A global vision of reality must always be open to creating new forms of order within which human life can evolve. The vision of James Lovelock and V. I. Vernadsky helped us see not only that life exists on Earth, but also that Earth itself is a living organism. The human being is the highest expression of Earth’s creation by virtue of our capacity to feel, think, love, and worship.

**After publication of your 1984 book *Church: Charisma and Power*, the Vatican prohibited your writing and teaching, a turning point in the strained relationship between liberation theology and the Church. How did you respond to this?**

The imposition of “*silentium obsequiosum*” in 1985 by the Vatican forbade me from speaking and writing. That is when I began to study ecology, Earth science, and their relation to human activity. This coincided with an invitation to participate in a small, international group convened by Mikhail Gorbachev and Steven Rockefeller to explore universal values and principles essential for saving Earth from the multiple threats she faces. I had the opportunity to meet

leading scientists while actively participating in drafting a text that significantly inspired Pope Francis's recent encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. I was determined to ensure that the views of the Earth Charter would be based on a new paradigm incorporating the interdependency of all creatures—indeed the whole living fabric—and the need for mutual care. This paradigm must extend beyond a purely environmental ecology to an “integral ecology” that includes society, human consciousness, education, daily life, and spirituality.

This must start with the new paradigm for physical reality that has emerged from the thinking of Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, Stephen Hawking, Brian Swimme, Ilya Prigogine, Humberto Maturana, Christian de Duve, and many others who see the universe as a process of cosmogenesis—expanding, self-regenerating orders of increasing complexity. The basic law governing this cosmological vision is that everything has to do with everything else at all times and in all circumstances. Nothing is outside this integrated vision. Knowledge and science are interlinked to form a greater whole. Contrary to the earlier atomized paradigm, this helps us develop a holistic view of a world in continuous motion. Mutation, not stability, is the natural state of the universe and Earth. And we humans are intrinsic to this process. So I believe there are four major trends in ecological thinking: environmental, social, mental, and integral. Together, these form a reality in which the component parts are dynamically in tune with each other.

### **Do you see elements of liberation theology in Pope Francis's recent encyclical *Laudato Si'*?**

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* is the fruit of the theological ecology that developed in recent years in Latin America. The Pope adopted the method of “see, judge, act, and celebrate” and used it to organize the encyclical. He makes use of the basic categories that we used in Latin America, such as the “relatedness of all with all,” the focus on the poor and the vulnerable, the intrinsic value of every being, the ethics of care and collective responsibility, and—especially—the condemnation of the system that produces the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth, a system that is anti-life, perhaps even suicidal. The document is full of the resonances of liberation theology and encourages liberation theologians as well as like-minded churches and theology everywhere.

### **Many view religion in the contemporary world as a source of strife and exclusion rather than the harmony and inclusiveness needed to foster global solidarity. Do such critics of religion have a valid point?**

Almost all religions show signs of the sickness of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is not a doctrine but a way of understanding doctrine. Fundamentalists think that their doctrine and their truth is the only one. Others are wrong and deserve no rights. From these conflicts is born the bloodshed we know too well, conflicts pursued in God's name. But this is a pathology that does not eliminate the true nature of religion. Everything healthy can get sick. That is what is happening today. On the other hand, compare the conflicts driven by fundamentalism with the hopefulness of leaders like the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Pope Francis, who are clamoring for cooperation among religions and spiritual paths to help overcome the current ecological crisis.

**What is your view on the prospects for a progressive transformation of religious institutions and for the overall shift in of planetary civilization we call the Great Transition? And what role would religious institutions play in this transformation?**

I think the legacy of the financial crisis is the insight that the global capitalist system met its limit in 2007–2008. More than an economic crisis, it was a crisis of Earth’s limited resources. Shortly after the onset of the financial crisis, scientists announced the infamous Earth Overshoot Day, calling attention to the fact that the pressure we put on Earth exceeds its biocapacity. But this moment, which should have provoked reflection on our profound lack of environmental consciousness, passed with little public reaction.

Because of the inseparability of the ecological and the social, the looming depletion of resources could lead to social unrest of great proportions. Today, at least forty armed conflicts afflict the world. Our system does not have the tools to solve the problems it has created. As Albert Einstein eloquently stated, “We cannot solve the problems using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

We have to think and act differently. The Earth Charter explicitly states, and Pope Francis [has repeated](#), “Common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. This requires a change in the mind and in the heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility to reach a sustainable way of life locally, regionally, nationally and globally.” This is the foundation for a different way of inhabiting the Common Home in which material resources are finite. In contrast, human and spiritual capital are inexhaustible because they are intangible and include limitless values such as love, solidarity, compassion, reverence, and care. This places life at the center: the life of Mother Earth, the life of nature, and human life.

<http://www.greattransition.org/publication/liberation-ecology>

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**August 1, 2016**

Youth Urge Pope to Push Harder for Divestment

By Ruth McCambridge  
Nonprofit Quarterly

On [World Youth Day](#), celebrated this year in Krakow, Poland, an open letter signed by over 120 youth groups was delivered to Pope Francis, asking that he urge Catholic organizations of all kinds to divest from fossil fuels while continuing his own efforts to divest the Vatican.

In [Laudato Si'](#), [as readers may remember](#), Pope Francis powerfully acknowledged: “We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels needs to be progressively replaced without delay” and this acknowledgement has seemed to be taken to heart by American Catholics, as has recently been recorded by [the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate](#).

Since the pope’s encyclical, Thea Ormerod, the president of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, has found her role in encouraging Catholic religious organizations to divest

publicly has become much easier. “[The pope] saying our need to move away from fossil fuels is urgent—that’s quite powerful. Sometimes parishioners have been told by the parish priest, ‘No, that’s too political—it’s not aligned with Catholic values.’ No priest can say that now.”

Four orders of Australian Catholics [declared their intentions to divest](#) back in June. The four orders are: Marist Sisters Australia; Presentation Congregation Queensland; Presentation Sisters Wagga Wagga; and the Passionists—Holy Spirit Province Australia, NZ, PNG and Vietnam. Father Thomas McDonough from the Passionists said his congregation had long understood their need to be “ecologically responsible.”

Pope Francis, in his *Laudato Si’*, crystallised for us the level of responsibility we need to take as a congregation—the urgency for action ever more apparent. So we trustees of the Passionists took the decision to begin diverting our investments from fossil fuel extractive industries and into renewable energy. We believe the Gospel asks no less of us.

It’s true that some very large Catholic organizations around the globe have millions of dollars invested in fossil fuel companies. However, institutions like Georgetown University, the University of Dayton, Trócaire, and the Franciscan Sisters of Mary have already committed to divest, joining approximately 530 institutions with a collective \$3.4 trillion in funds under management. They include the World Council of Churches, the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Stanford and Oxford Universities.

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/08/01/youth-urge-pope-push-harder-divestment/>

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## **August 4, 2016**

Prayer for a planet: Pope Francis and the politics of climate change

By Bill Blaikie  
iPolitics

Last week, about 2 million young people — including nearly 4,000 Canadians — gathered in Poland to hear Pope Francis speak at Catholic World Youth Day. Even if, like me, you’re neither young nor Catholic, this was still an event with interesting ramifications for Canada and our politics.

World Youth Day happens every few years; this was the first edition since the Pope released his encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015, which focused on environmental and ecological issues. It is a bold document: Pope Francis was unambiguous about the role humans play in driving climate change, and also about the need for changes in energy policy, in modes of production and consumption, and in the established structures of power.

For the youth who gathered in the height of summer, climate change is hard to ignore. This year will be the hottest one they — or any person alive — has ever seen, with each of the first six months of 2016 breaking temperature records. Here in Canada, the Fort McMurray wildfires

have become the costliest natural disaster in Canadian history, and scientists tell us that we can expect a warming world to produce more and more extreme weather events.

Pope Francis hasn't been timid in speaking about these issues. In September, after publishing the aforementioned encyclical, he became the first pontiff to address both houses of the U.S. Congress. His remarks challenged Republicans and Democrats alike to question whether their politics — their most powerful tool to change the world for the better — truly reflected their faiths where the environment is concerned.

Many young Catholics are paying attention to his example. Last week, two associations representing 10 million Catholic students worldwide called on their governments to invest in their futures by creating more of the clean energy jobs that they want to work in. Youth also made their voices heard at a conference about the encyclical, which was attended by high-ranking church officials and Poland's conservative minister of the environment. And *Laudato Si* may be the first encyclical to inspire a hashtag, as people took to social media to pledge concrete actions they will take to live more sustainably.

A year ago, I publicly pondered whether the Pope's encyclical would shake up established ways of thinking about climate change. So far, the momentum seems to be on the side of action. In Canada, governments at all levels are putting more energy into climate policy than we've seen in many years. And that makes World Youth Day, where we can see both religious and generational dynamics at play, all the more fascinating.

There is a long and rich history of faith communities helping to drive progressive political causes, including in Canada. Pope Francis' leadership on issues like climate change may revitalize and expand that impulse in the Catholic community — Canada's largest religious group, with more than 12 million believers.

The result may not be overnight change, but the changes we do see will be reinforced by generational turnover. There is tremendous unity among young people on this issue: Canadians under the age of 35 are the most likely to be concerned about climate change, and to support the development of clean energy solutions.

Politicians are learning that lesson. It's telling that Preston Manning, my fellow parliamentarian and an elder statesman of Canadian conservatives, has taken a strong interest in environmental issues. We disagree on many things — including the appropriate policy responses to climate change — but we both see that the era of denying or downplaying this issue is over. Dealing with climate change has always been a moral obligation. Increasingly, it's becoming a political necessity as well.

The young Catholics who gathered in Poland to celebrate their faith, and the gift of our common world, may be a positive sign of what's to come. The challenges that climate change poses are common to us all. Let's hope that soon we'll be able to say the same about the solutions.

<http://ipolitics.ca/2016/08/04/prayer-for-a-planet-pope-francis-and-the-politics-of-climate-change/>

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**August 4, 2016**

Amazon megadam denied licence over environmental, indigenous concerns

By Megan Darby  
Climate Home

The 8GW Sao Luiz do Tapajos hydropower project is expected to get the thumbs down from Brazilian regulators, in move cautiously welcomed by activists

A mammoth 8GW dam in the Amazon rainforest is set to be denied a licence, in a sign Brazil could be shifting away from hydropower.

That was the outcome of a meeting of the top government lawyer and agencies for the environment and indigenous people this week, newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo [reported](#).

They cited unanswered concerns about the impact of the Sao Luiz do Tapajos project, one of seven planned along the same river, on the environment and indigenous communities.

“When we heard this news, it made us very happy, because this is our home,” Munduruku leader Cacique Celso Tawe told Climate Home through an interpreter.

“The river for us is our life. We live by hunting and fishing and that is why our people oppose the dams.”

He was in Rio de Janeiro with other indigenous activists ahead of the Olympic games. They were highlighting the gap between the multicultural vibe [promoted](#) by organisers and the violence faced by forest-dwellers who protest development on their traditional land – whether hydro, logging or agribusiness.

Global Witness has recorded more than 150 murders of environmental defenders in Brazil since the last Olympics in 2012.

Many communities, including the Munduruku, have been struggling for decades to get land rights. Far from the cities, they get little help from law enforcement.

They fear things will get worse under interim president Michel Temer, who is seeking to make life easier for businesses in the economic slump by [scrapping regulations](#).

Environment minister Jose Sarney Filho, on the other hand, has [proved sympathetic](#) to concerns about hydropower, calling for a more diverse energy mix.

Once built, hydropower dams generate renewable electricity on large scale, but that comes at a cost to the forest, wildlife and communities in their path.

Sarney is proposing a push for wind and bioenergy instead. It would be a significant shift for a country that gets three quarters of its power from hydro.

Sonia Guajajara, coordinator of the Brazil's Association of Indigenous Peoples, welcomed Sarney's stance but expressed scepticism it would be enough.

The similarly controversial 11GW Belo Monte dam is under construction, she noted, despite temporary wins for opponents along the way.

"The economic interests behind the project are so strong," said Guajajara through an interpreter. "We need to stay vigilant."

<http://www.climatechangenews.com/2016/08/04/amazon-megadam-denied-licence-over-environmental-indigenous-concerns/>

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## August 8, 2016

Closed mines haunt two towns in Honduras as threats against activists mount

By J. Malcolm Garcia  
Global Sisters Report

Global Sisters Report is focusing a [\*special series on mining\*](#) and extractive industries and the women religious who work to limit damage and impact on people and the environment, through advocacy, action and policy. Pope Francis last year called for the entire mining sector to undergo "a radical paradigm change." Sisters are on the front lines to help effect that change.

The mines no longer operate.

The large trucks that carried heavy equipment no longer rumble down dirt roads fogging the air with dust.

The workers no longer trudge along those same roads inhaling the dust weighted by the humidity of dawn.

Community opposition succeeded in shutting down mines in Nueva Esperanza in northern Honduras and El Tránsito far to the south near the border of Nicaragua. But to many people in these two small towns the closings serve only as a pyrrhic victory.

For now, the armed guards that circled the mines are gone. But gone, too, are the jobs the mines provided. In their place is a lingering loss of trust among residents in these agricultural communities and a continuing fear that this is just a temporary respite before the mines in both towns reopen.



The privately owned mines began their operations in regions where families had subsisted off the land for centuries. The mines' presence altered both the landscape and the social fabric of these communities.

Now, more than two years after countless protests stopped the mines, the fault lines between those who support mining and those who don't because of concern about the potential for environmental damage and the loss of a way of life continue to divide communities and even some families. More disturbingly, death threats toward opponents of mining have become an increasing concern, especially since the murder of Honduran environmental activist [Berta Cáceres](#) in March of this year.

Honduras now has the [highest murder rate](#) for environmental activists in the world, and conflict over land rights is the primary driver. Rampant inequality, a weak judicial system, cozy relationships between political and business elites, and near total impunity for crimes against human rights defenders have contributed to 109 murders of environmental activists between 2010 and 2015, according to [Global Witness](#), a British non-governmental organization which tracks human rights and environmental abuses.

"We were threatened: 'You better not show your face in this town again,' " said Sr. Maria de Rosario Soriano, a member of the Messengers of the Immaculate order, who with other sisters from her community supported anti-mining activists in Nueva Esperanza. "We didn't go to Nueva Esperanza for a few weeks. Even the priests and our mother superior told us it was better to stay away for a while."

Hundreds of miles away, outside El Tránsito, where tree-lined mountains punctuate a seared skyline of hazy heat, Sr. Reyna Corea sat in the shaded terrace of [Hermanas of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary](#). She knew of the struggles in Nueva Esperanza but said with evident relief that El Tránsito was not as divided. However, she added, all was not well. Differences between the residents of El Tránsito and implicit threats existed there, too.

"I feel I'm discriminated against by the police and municipality," said Corea, 51, who opposed mining in El Tránsito. "When I need help to bring water to a community, they deny me and the other sisters. They say we are with those activists who protest and riot. They say we are with the instigators. They say, 'You better stop what you are doing.' In Honduras, such a warning makes an impression."

### **The mine comes to Nueva Esperanza**

Nueva Esperanza is home to about 1,000 people. Five rivers run through it: Leán, Congo, the Metalias, Santiago and Alao. The town sits at the foot and climbs up the slopes of the mountains that separate the department or county of Atlántida from the neighboring department of Yoro. The mountains hold gold, iron and other mineral deposits. Dirt roads, some not more than paths, line the mountains. The people here farm the rich soil, harvesting corn, beans and other basic staples.

"We are poor," a woman said near the church in Arizona, about a two-hour drive from Nueva Esperanza, "but we are not hungry."

Between 2011 and 2013, when businessman Lenir Perez, owner of the Minerales Victoria mining company, purchased 2471.05 acres, covering all of Nueva Esperanza and 15 other farming communities, the residents of Nueva Esperanza "were victims of militarization and paramilitarization of their territories, persecution and threats, and police and judicial harassment," according to a co-sponsored report by El Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación (ERIC), a Jesuit-sponsored investigation and research organization in Honduras, and the [College for Public Health and Social Justice](#) at Saint Louis University of Missouri. [The June 2016 report](#) found that families lived under siege. Activists received death threats from the police and anonymous callers by phone and text messaging.

"For more than a year we could not go out after 6 p.m.," said activist Olga Hernandez, 29, a Nueva Esperanza resident. "Private security from the mine patrolled the streets. Nothing ever happened. It was a psychological thing: 'Don't go out, or else.' That 'or else' kept us inside."

Despite the intimidation, Soriano spoke out against the mine.

"The mine first came offering jobs and huge amounts of money for land," she recalled. "So, we started telling the community, 'Don't be naive and believe in everything they offer.'"

Soriano said she and another sister, Presentación Aguilar, organized community meetings in local churches to discuss mining and its impact on health and the environment. They cited the Book of Genesis and how it called on mankind to protect nature, not exploit it.

Perez, the sisters said, never confronted them. But men with guns who did not wear police or military uniforms observed their meetings. They did not attend but peered through windows.

"We had to give talks with armed goons looking in on us," Soriano said. "It came to a point where we were so afraid we called our mother superior and asked her if we should leave or stay. She told us to look into our hearts and we felt we could not leave the community."

The sisters stayed, but the harassment, they said, continued even within the church. At one meeting, Aguilar discussed her opposition to mining when a member of the church jumped up and told her to shut up and stop spreading lies.

"You could feel the anger and the uproar in the entire community," said Aguilar. "Hatred was in the air between those who worked for the mine and those who opposed it. Even in church gatherings."

Although Perez, who did not return repeated phone calls and emails requesting an interview for this story, never confronted the sisters, he did communicate with the vicar of the nearby parish of Arizona. A priest there, Fr. Cesar Espinoza, had been voicing his support for those who opposed mining.

"I spoke out against the mine," Espinoza, 39, recalled. "On local radio, from the pulpit. I asked the bishop to speak out against it. I spoke everywhere and wrote my opinions for publications."

In May 2013, Espinoza's supervisor, the vicar, exchanged emails with Perez. He chastised Perez for not being candid about his operation and for increasing antagonism.

"Do you think being transparent is to sneak in machinery on a Saturday escorted by the police?" Vicar Victor Camara wrote in an email, a copy of which was provided to *Global Sisters Report*. "Have you chosen force and conflict? I hope that you ponder the consequences and that above all no human lives be put at stake, since no human life is worth all the gold in the world. Please know that with conflict there will be no winners, everybody will lose, including you."

Perez responded that he "only believed in doing things in an honest way." He said it saddened him to see Honduras "taken apart by businessmen, drug dealers, politicians and environmentalists (communists and subversive *curas*)."  
*Curas* is a derogatory term for priests. Perez also accused the church of cowardice for not having stopped Espinoza's advocacy against the mine. He called Espinoza "another sinner behind his robe."

"Believe me, I would like to open that mine hand in hand with the community," Perez wrote, "but I will not allow a Guatemalan [Espinoza] and the activists to destroy this country."

Two months later, on July 25, 2013, Orlane Vidal and Daniel Langmeier, with the [Honduras Accompaniment Project](#), a program of the Friendship Office of the Americas designed to engage in nonviolent protest in Honduras, were [held captive](#) for two and a half hours by armed men, who, according to Amnesty International, were from the Nueva Esperanza mining project.

The observers had been staying with a family opposed to the mine. Amnesty International found that the leader of the armed men told Vidal and Langmeier that they would be "disappeared in the woods" if they returned to the area. The observers were held at gunpoint and warned not to speak publicly about their abduction. They were released at a bus stop in Nueva Florida, a town not far from Nueva Esperanza. [They filed complaints with the authorities. The abductors were not charged.](#)

"It was like an amber alert when we heard about the abduction," Espinoza recalled. "Everyone — activists, church members — called the government demanding their release. The vice president issued the order to locate them immediately."

The kidnapping galvanized the community. Honduran law allows mayors the final decision on whether a mine can or cannot operate in their township. In the municipal elections of 2013, anti-mine activists met with mayoral candidates and asked them to sign an anti-mining pledge. On August 20, 2014, upon taking office, the newly elected mayor, Mario Fuentes, closed the Nueva Esperanza mine. But activists say the closing did not end the matter.

"The problem is still ongoing," said Sr. Aguilar. "The mine still owns the land. What will happen if we elect a mayor who supports mining?"

Activist Olga Hernandez said the land remains as scarred as the community.

"Today, you see plants and trees growing back but the personal damage is like the mountains they flattened. You can't make a mountain grow back."

After the mine closed, resentful, unemployed mine workers unleashed their anger toward the activists, said Arizona deputy mayor Cesar Alvarenga, an opponent of the mine. He said his wife left him because of the threats.

"Yes, I still get threats," Alvarenga said. "This fight has ruined my life. It is very difficult to live with fear because we know these people are so powerful. They have money and the support of the government and won't go away easily. They invested a lot of money, and we know they won't lose it like that."

### **A town with a 200-year-old mining history**

More than 500 miles south of Nueva Esperanza, the town of El Tránsito stands beneath a wide sky and bright sun that scorches the land with a dry heat far different from the humidity that wraps the mountains of Nueva Esperanza.

The El Tránsito mine dates back to the early 1800s. Hundreds of mining tunnels, residents say, run beneath the town like a maze of prairie dog burrows, destabilizing centuries-old buildings. Decades of mining, residents say, polluted local waters making it unfit for human consumption because of high levels of cyanide and lead, among other heavy minerals. There are no known official reports, but residents say they don't use the water.

"We used to play in the closed mines," recalled activist Jose Lucio Lopez, 43, who grew up in El Tránsito. "It was a beautiful little town. Quiet. Nothing was ever disturbed."

The mine had been closed for decades when it started operations again in 2014 after Honduran businesswoman Maria Gertrudis Valle claimed the land as belonging to her. She did not respond to messages from *GSR* asking for comment.

"Five years ago this woman came into town," recalled Sr. Reyna Corea. "She said she had documents that showed this land belonged to her. She sent representatives to speak for her. She was like a ghost, rarely seen but known to exist."

At first, Corea said, the residents of El Tránsito supported the mine until its workers began using explosives. The ground trembled and the walls and floors of houses began to crack.

"They dynamited day and night," Lopez said. He said as many as 200 people from outside the town would come to work in the mine.

"The whole town would shake from the dynamite," Lopez said. "As many as 80 explosions a day, every day."

More than 200 activists, he said, organized sit-ins blocking the road to the mine. Twenty people always occupied the road 24 hours a day. If activists saw a stranger in town they suspected of being with the mine or an unfamiliar vehicle, they would ring the church bell, a call to activists to support the people at the sit-in. The protesters would not allow miners who had managed to enter the property to leave. Police were forced to bring them food and water. A year after the sit-ins began, the mine ceased operations in November 2015. Success, however, has not lessened the threats activists here say they face.

"People have tried to bribe us to be quiet," said Lourdes Zelaya, 43, a mother of two children, of herself and her husband. "We have been chased by cars and motorcycles trying to force us off the road. People tell us, 'Watch out. You will be killed.' At the sit-in, a police officer told my husband, 'You will be killed.' We tried to file a complaint, but the police department refused to take it."

Her 18-year-old daughter Marci said she, too, feels in danger.

"I live in fear something will happen to me because of what is happening to my parents," she said. "I'd like to help them but I don't know how. I am vulnerable. I know they can hurt my parents by doing something to me."

The ongoing threats against activists suggest that the mine owner or other business interests hope to reopen the mine, Corea said.

"As in Nueva Esperanza and all over Honduras, the mine owners will keep trying," she said. "They will not fall asleep because the mine is not operating. Of course, the problem always comes down to money. People see cash and they lose sight of things, so if money comes then we can't say what will happen."

[J. Malcolm Garcia is a freelance writer and author of [\*The Khaarijee: A Chronicle of Friendship and War in Kabul\*](#), [\*What Wars Leave Behind: The Faceless and the Forgotten\*](#). He is a recipient of the Studs Terkel Prize for writing about the working classes and the Sigma Delta Chi Award for excellence in journalism.]

<http://globalsistersreport.org/news/environment/closed-mines-haunt-two-towns-honduras-threats-against-activists-mount-41521>

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**August 9, 2016**

Top 10 messages of 'Laudato Si''

By Father James Martin, SJ  
Catholic San Francisco

*Jesuit Father James Martin, editor-at-large for America magazine, distilled the nearly 200 pages of "Laudato Si'" into 10 key messages in a four-minute video produced last summer, offering Catholics a visual digest of the document. View it at [sfarch.org/green](http://sfarch.org/green).*

1. A spiritual perspective

"The big contribution of 'Laudato Si'" is its overview of the environmental crisis from a religious point of view. Until now, the dialogue was framed mainly with political, scientific and economic language."

2. Effects on the poor

"The disproportionate effect of environmental change on the poor is strongly highlighted on almost every page of the document. The pope provides many examples of the effects of climate change whose worse effects are felt by those in developing countries."

3. Technocratic mindset critiqued

"He critiques an unthinking reliance on market forces in which every technological advancement is embraced before thinking about how it will affect our world. Christian spirituality by contrast offers growth through moderation and the capacity to be happy with little."

4. Authoritative teaching

"Pope Francis explicitly states that 'Laudato Si'" is now added to the body of the church's social teaching, continuing a reflection on modern day problems that began with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical 'Rerum Novarum,' on capital and labor in 1891."

5. Christian/biblical roots

"The pope takes readers through the call to care for creation that extends far back as the book of Genesis, when human kind is called to 'till and keep the earth.'

6. Everything is connected

"We are included in nature and thus in constant interaction with it. But our decisions have an inevitable effect on the environment. A blind pursuit of money that sets aside the interests of the marginalized and poor and the ruination of the planet are connected."

7. Embrace of science

"Pope Francis does not try to prove anything about climate change. 'Laudato Si'" draws both on church teaching and contemporary modern day scientific findings to help modern day people find answers to contemporary questions."

8. Selfishness and indifference critiqued

"Frequently, decision makers are removed from the poor, with no real physical connection to their brothers and sisters. Selfishness also leads to the evaporation of the notion of the common good."

9. Global dialogue and solidarity

"Perhaps more than any encyclical the pope draws from the experiences of people around the world. He calls into dialogue and debate all people about our common home."

10. He addresses everyone on the planet

“The document is hopeful, reminding us that because God is with us, all of us can strive to change course and work toward an ‘ecological conversion’ where we can hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

<http://www.catholic-sf.org/ns.php?newsid=22&id=64520>

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## **August 9, 2016**

Charity Sr. Paula Gonzalez, 'the solar nun,' dies at age 83

By Sharon Abercrombie  
National Catholic Reporter

Environmentalists are mourning the death of Charity Sr. Paula Gonzalez, a Cincinnati nun who spent the last 45 years of her life advocating for renewable energy. Gonzalez, 83, died July 31 at the Charity Sisters' Ohio motherhouse.

Born on Oct. 25 1932, in Albuquerque, N.M., Gonzalez entered the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in 1954. She later earned a Ph.D. in cellular physiology from the Catholic University of America and taught biology at Mount St. Joseph University, in Cincinnati, from 1965-1980 before becoming involved full time in environmental ministry.

That included participating in the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro – which produced a global blueprint for sustainable development and formed the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change -- and its 10-year follow-up in Johannesburg, South Africa.

According to the [U.K.-based \*Catholic Herald\*](#), Gonzalez called the Rio conference that gathered nearly 20,000 people “a watershed moment in history,” saying “This many people coming together to choose the future: This is the beginning of the ecological era.”

### **‘The solar nun’**

Widely known as “the solar nun,” it is probably no surprise that “Paula died on a SUN-day,” reflected Canadian Charity Sr. Maureen Wild, spokesperson for Sisters of Earth, an organization of religious and lay women dedicated to healing the planet. In 1996, members of the brand new organization visited Gonzalez's “La Casa del Sol” (“The House of the Sun”) green home during their summer meeting in Grailville, Ohio.

La Casa del Sol was Gonzalez's first major foray into the realm of renewable energy. The 1,500 square-foot passive-solar, super-insulated home cost less than \$10 per square foot to build, she [told \*Mother Earth News Magazine\*](#) in the May-June 1986 issue. Beginning in 1982, every Saturday for three years a group of 30-plus volunteers worked to renovate an old chicken barn

into the new structure using used recycled materials, including metal salvage. Gonzalez financed the project through garage sales that collected close to \$13,000.

Her experiment was a success. When the weather plummeted to zero in February 1985, La Casa del Sol remained at 50 degrees. She revved up the heat a bit by feeding the wood stove with a few leftover construction scraps. Gonzalez and La Casa del Sol were featured in the PBS series *Earthkeepers* in 1993.

In 1991, using the same garage sale financing formula, she turned an old four-car garage into EarthConnection, a 21<sup>st</sup> century solar-heated energy efficient building. Now a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, EarthConnection serves as an educational center offering programs in sustainable agriculture, alternative energies, eco justice and eco-spirituality.

### **Early roots of ecological passion**

Gonzalez told *NCR* [in a 2011 interview](#) that she traced part of her passion for ecology to the first Earth Day in 1970 when she was inspired by the outpouring of enthusiasm across the United States. A few years later when controversy erupted over a new proposed nuclear power plant, she realized that protesting by itself cannot solve energy problems. Creating life-sustaining alternatives needed to be a part of the plan, too.

But the original roots of her passion were lovingly cultivated through childhood experiences. Growing up in Albuquerque, she spent hours of contentment helping her father Hilario in his vegetable garden.

“He would tell me, 'The Earth is sacred,’” she told *Eco Catholic* in 2011.

At an early age her soul was touched by the God she referred to as “The Great Living One” – a Divinity she grew to recognize as being present throughout all of creation. Topics from some of her talks and writings reflected this: “Living in a Eucharistic Universe,” “Called to Tend the Sacred” and “The Our Father: Our Environmental Prayer.”

Gonzalez shared her Lord’s Prayer meditation [in an October 2007 piece](#) for *St. Anthony Messenger*. Using Sufi author Dr. Neil Douglas-Klotz's Aramaic translation, she wrote that in “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven,” Father actually meant birther of the cosmos and that heaven would actually be the universe.

“When we proclaim God's name as ‘hallowed’ (holy), do we recognize the echo of God's name in the wonder all around us? Might God be calling us to be co-creators of a transformed Earth, a heaven of peace and harmony?” she wrote.

Gonzalez was adept at combining the practical with the mystical in the more than 1,800 talks, lectures and retreats that she presented across the world. In the *MotherEarth* article, she explained that she often invited individuals to consider “what might happen if, instead of fighting (all the way up to nuclear war) to extend the 'good old days' of the petroleum era, we began to tap our boundless creativity and imagination to design the 'better new days'?”



In 2005 the American Solar Energy Society's Ohio chapter, Green Energy Ohio, gave the nun their Lifetime Achievement Award.

Two years later, while attending a solar conference in Cleveland, she and engineer Keith Mills were inspired to address the issue of global warming and agreed to co-found the Ohio affiliate of the Regeneration Project, a ministry sponsored by Interfaith Power and Light. In 2014, the *Cincinnati Inquirer* honored Gonzalez as [one of its "Women of the Year."](#)

The publication in June 2015 of Pope Francis' environmental encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home" thrilled Gonzalez, who [told NCR](#) she was excited he included "a lot of background stuff," predicting that "he's going to grab the attention of the global community for sure."

### **'A force of nature'**

News of Gonzalez's death prompted reactions of sadness and love, from a few of the individuals she has influenced in her ministry.

One of them is environmental songwriter, Joyce Rouse, aka Earth Mama, who first met Gonzalez in the early 1990s. The Charity sister left her mark on a few of Earth Mama's songs, among them: "We All Breath the Same Air," "The Perfect House" and "Follow the Sun."

"She became an enthusiastic supporter of my making music for Earth Literacy," Rouse said. "Every conversation with her was an opportunity to soak up a deeper understanding of the universal connectedness of all things."

Brian Swimme, a professor of evolutionary cosmology at the California Institute of Integral Studies and the co-author of *The Universe Story* with Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry, considered Gonzalez as being "sent from the future to show us how to live with intelligence and wisdom.

"The fire in her! Paula was 20 years older than me and when I first met her I thought to myself, 'I hope I have her energy at her age,' ... Prophet, inventor, scientist gadfly, leader, Sr. Paula was first and foremost an inspiration for us trying to live an ecological life," Swimme said.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, director of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, said she will remember her friend as "a force of nature that lives on in our midst. She lived in a world of energy of her own creation while drawing on the power of the universe."

Sara Ward, director of Ohio Interfaith Power and Light, lauded Gonzalez for "helping us understand how weatherization for the poor was also helping to reduce our use of fossil fuels which were polluting our air."

Ward saw the sister in June when the IPL board met at EarthConnection for its annual retreat. "Even in her limited physical capacity Paula mustered the strength to join us each day for a few hours, lifting us all with her presence, and yes, her still strong voice for caring for God's amazing creation," she said.

Ward witnessed the nun's green burial and rite of committal on Aug. 2 at the Cincinnati motherhouse cemetery, describing it as “sweet and simple.”

“The sun was shining, there were puffs of clouds, dragonflies, butterflies, birds and all manner of God's creation came together to honor her. As she was presented for burial in her white shroud we gathered and said prayers and petitions as a community, sprinkled her with water and laid flowers all around her,” Ward recounted.

Ward added she was both full of sorrow and joy all at once “as I could just sense her delight as we gathered around her. So peaceful, beautiful and full of grace.”

The group said their final goodbye to the five-foot-tall ecological giant with this prayer:

“Into the beauty of mother earth, we release you. Into the freedom of wind and sunshine, into the dance of the stars and planets. We release you into the next part of our spiritual journey as you walk hand in hand with your creator God. We release you to go safely, go dancing, go joyfully home.”

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/charity-sr-paula-gonzalez-solar-nun-remembered-environmentalists-force-nature>

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## **August 10, 2016**

When Protest Becomes Sacrament: Grady Sisters Heed a Higher Call  
By Nicholas Kusnetz  
Inside Climate News

These Catholic social justice advocates are exemplars of the force behind We Are Seneca Lake, one of the nation's longest-running campaigns of civil disobedience.

On a warm May morning, two dozen people wearing blue shirts formed a neat line in front of the gates of a natural gas compressor station in central New York. The facility lay hidden somewhere in the trees behind them, and just beyond was Seneca Lake, a 38-mile azure gash through deep green hills that provides drinking water to 100,000 people. The sun crept over a ridge on the far side of the lake. It was still early enough to intercept the day's first delivery.

Within minutes, a tanker truck neared the gates and pulled onto the shoulder. Word soon came that sheriff's deputies were on their way, and the protesters started singing a verse that became a spiritual anthem of the civil rights movement.

*We shall, we shall not be moved*

*We shall, we shall not be moved*

*Just like a tree that's standing by the water*

## *We shall not be moved*

Leading the song were three sisters, each in their 50s, who had come to protest the expansion of a gas storage facility here. Ellen, Clare and Teresa Grady, together with two other siblings who weren't there that morning, have organized their lives around acts like these. The Gradys were raised in the radical Catholic social justice community of the Vietnam era. Their parents worked with Daniel and Philip Berrigan, brothers and Catholic priests famous for their anti-war raids on draft offices in the 1960s and '70s. As part of Dorothy Day's [Catholic Worker](#) movement, they aim to "live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ."

By the time they were in their 20s, Ellen and Clare were sneaking into weapons facilities with the Bible-inspired anti-nuclear Plowshares movement. That's where Ellen met her future husband, Peter De Mott, with whom she built a family devoted to faith and protest. After 25 years of marriage, De Mott died suddenly—he fell out of a tree in an accident—leaving behind Ellen and their four daughters.

Ellen's and Clare's first arrest here came last year in direct response to Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*. The papal letter issued [an urgent plea](#) for action on what Francis called "global environmental deterioration," as grave a threat as nuclear war. The sisters' stand at the gates of the Seneca Lake compressor station was not simply an act of protest, but a sacrament, like the Eucharist or marriage.

"We're trying to live the call to not be silent in the face of injustice," Ellen said, "and live the call to love one another and love creation."

The sisters are hardly leaders of this protest movement, which goes by the name We Are Seneca Lake. A steering committee loosely coordinates a diverse collection of grandmothers, parents, students and other community members who have been coming to these gates every couple of weeks for nearly two years to block deliveries and, usually, to get arrested.

With more than [400 people led away in police cars and paddy wagons](#) across 50 blockades so far, the campaign is perhaps the nation's longest-running act of environmental civil disobedience. They see the gas project not simply as a threat to the lake, but also an affront to the state's ban on fracking, enacted two years ago by Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The expansion of the storage facility here, [approved by federal authorities](#) in 2014, would allow more gas from the fracking fields of Pennsylvania and beyond to flow through here, deepening reliance on fossil fuels. The sisters, and this movement, slide into a space left open by the lack of a clear national energy policy. Infrastructure projects such as these [are effectively shaping](#) the nation's energy future. Once built, they are hard to close, costing jobs and threatening local economies.

Activists around the country are similarly devoting their efforts to stopping individual fossil fuel projects. In Georgia, landowners [fought off a major energy company](#) from building a pipeline for refined oil. In Massachusetts and Washington state, protesters have blocked trains hauling crude.

In Colorado, Utah and Louisiana activists have disrupted auctions of oil and gas leases. Running through all these disparate acts of protest is the unifying theme to "keep it in the ground."

## **A Protest Is Born**

In 1893, the Glen Salt Company drilled down 1,902 feet into the Syracuse Formation, layers of rock and salt left behind by an ancient inland sea that now lie beneath the rolling hills of New York's Finger Lakes region. It was the first of many wells through which the company and its successors would pump fresh water to dissolve the salt for evaporation and production on the surface. Over time, the process left behind dozens of caverns, some of which have been used to store natural gas.

While construction has yet to begin, plans to expand the existing storage facility—now owned by a joint venture of Consolidated Edison, Inc., a New York utility, and Crestwood Equity Partners LP, a Texas-based pipeline and storage company—date back at least to 2009. They call for increasing the site's natural gas capacity while adding storage of up to 63 million gallons of liquid petroleum gas, a byproduct of gas drilling. Construction would include new compressor stations, a pond to store brine from the caverns and a flare stack. (Petroleum gas storage is overseen by the state, which has yet to rule whether that part of the project can proceed.)

At the time, many Finger Lakes residents worried that the fracking boom overtaking parts of Pennsylvania could spread to New York. Some formed a group called Gas Free Seneca, which commissioned a study that said the caverns are unstable and prone to leaks. They warned that an accident could cause explosions or allow brine or gas to seep into the lake, polluting the water. Pollution from the compressor stations would detract from the area's bucolic character. Tourism to the nearby wineries would suffer.

[Sandra Steingraber](#), a biologist and scholar-in-residence at Ithaca College, 20 miles east of Seneca Lake, had been active in the campaign to ban fracking. In 2012, she led a march on Albany [carrying a declaration](#) signed by more than 3,000 people who pledged to engage in protests "and other non-violent actions" should fracking proceed. So when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission seemed like it was heading toward approval of the facility, Steingraber and several residents of towns surrounding the lake felt they had no other recourse than to move outside the system.

"I guess I thought, if you won't listen to me as a health biologist, then you'll have to listen to me as a mother," she said. "I'll put my body between the compressor station and the trucks."

When final approval came on September 30, 2014, the protesters were ready. First, it was 10 people—as young as 39 and old as 86—arrested on October 29, 2014. Five days later, 15 others came to block the gates. Another 10 were arrested in the driveway two weeks after that. In December, on the day of their eleventh action, the Cuomo administration [banned fracking in the state](#), handing a huge victory to a grassroots movement that had drawn much of its strength from the Finger Lakes region.

The decision energized the Seneca Lake activists, who began drawing in more supporters. Most came from nearby counties, but others flocked from across the country, viewing the protests as an integral piece of a national fight against fossil fuel projects. The organizers have been careful to keep their offenses to violations, akin to parking tickets, to attract a broader base and hold down legal costs.

"The thing that's been interesting about that is how they chose to strategically make this a long-term process," said Wes Gillingham, program director for Catskill Mountainkeeper, a New York advocacy group that campaigned against fracking. Gillingham was among more than 50 protesters [arrested in an action](#) in July. "It wasn't just 10 or 100 people going or this one-time thing. They've been able to sustain this for a long time, and the number of people arrested just keeps climbing, and it's showing the inertia of the political momentum in this process."

The methodical campaign has inspired others, including a group called [Resist AIM](#) that has staged a series of blockades to halt construction of a gas pipeline from New Jersey to Massachusetts. In March, Bill McKibben, who founded 350.org and helped lead the fight against the Keystone XL pipeline, [traveled to Seneca Lake](#) to join in the arrests, bringing with him national attention. We Are Seneca Lake's real strength, however, may lie not in its ability to attract climate celebrities like McKibben, but to draw in ordinary people who hadn't ever seen themselves as environmental activists.

### **Moral Protests of the Nuclear Age**

An hour before the protest at the lake, the Grady sisters packed into Teresa's boxy white Jetta sedan, chirping over each other in an unbroken stream of words. The subject was first arrests. For Ellen, it happened on a White House tour, when she displayed images of victims of the U.S.-backed war in El Salvador.

"We had them under our jackets and we took them out and knelt down and prayed," she said. "It would have been early '80s, like '81, or maybe even '80..."

"'80 was when we did the action at the Pentagon, in August," Teresa interrupted.

"Oh right, okay, so it would have been '81," Ellen said.

Teresa thought her first was at the Seneca Army Depot a few years later. She was 18 years old. For Clare, the oldest of the three, it might have been when she was 23 at a U.N. Special Session on Disarmament. But she wasn't sure.

"It's strange I don't remember," she said.

Ellen's memory of when she decided to lead a life of protest, however, is crystal clear.

"Picture me. I'm 17 years old. I had a babysitting job, I was just out of high school. I decided not to go to college because I was going to work around this whole issue of nuclear weapons. I didn't

know what I was going to do," she said. "The kids are playing and I'm reading the newspaper, and I read about the Plowshares 8 action, and I was like, 'Oh my God!'"

It was September 1980 when the Berrigan brothers and six other pacifists made headlines for their raid on a General Electric nuclear facility in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. After sneaking inside, the protesters proceeded to hammer on two missile nose cones, pour blood over documents, and pray for peace. It was the first of what would become dozens of anti-nuclear Plowshares actions, named after the biblical admonition to beat "swords into plowshares."

Two years later, Ellen was one of seven Catholic activists who raided the General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, Connecticut, where the Trident nuclear submarines were assembled. Like the Berrigans before them, they hammered on the missile hatches of the USS Georgia and poured blood over the boat.

Ellen's older brother John was also among the seven, as was Peter De Mott, whom Ellen would marry the following year. "It's a great way to meet your future partner," she said, laughing. Ellen and the other activists were quickly arrested and found themselves in court.

"The judge was very condescending," Ellen said. "He said to me, 'I hope by the time that you get old, you'll understand that you can't do this.' See how much I've learned?"

She was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison. De Mott got time, too, and the two began courting from behind bars. "He was on the men's side and I was on the women's side, and he started sending notes over," she said. They used a groundskeeper as a courier. "I started writing notes on paper towels and he started writing notes on paper towels and we sent them over to each other. It was kind of fun. But we never put our names on them in case we were caught."

A picture from the day of the action shows Ellen with dark hair, a round face and a cherubic smile. Today, the hair has faded but the smile remains unchanged, framed by a ruddy Irish complexion. "I had a very young look at the time," Ellen said. "She still does," Teresa said quietly.

## **Embracing Life**

Ellen lives in a three-story red log home that her brother built 30 years ago, just outside town. She moved in soon after, and they raised their children together for several years, squeezing in 11 people at one point. John and his family have since left. In their place came Mary Loehr, who met the Grady's in 1980 at a Pentagon protest.

Soon after, Loehr lived with the sisters and their mother for a year, and their outlook changed her life.

"It's just an embracing of life and an embracing of other people and a trust in God in ways that I hadn't been introduced to by my family, and it just spoke to me," Loehr said. "There was that whole worldview side, but the chemistry, the magnetism and the charisma of the sisters, and the fun."

In the 1990s, the Gradys helped establish the [Ithaca Catholic Worker](#) house, joining a community founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in the midst of the Great Depression. To pay the bills, Ellen provided elderly care and De Mott worked as a contractor and handyman.

They continued their activism but committed mostly minor offenses so as not to be separated from their children. One exception came in 2003, as American troops prepared to invade Iraq, when Clare, Teresa and De Mott raided a military recruiting center near Ithaca and poured blood on the walls, carrying on the tradition begun by the Berrigans during the Vietnam War. They were eventually [convicted on misdemeanor charges](#) and given sentences ranging from four to eight months.

Then, a few years later, De Mott fell from a tree he was trimming.

"It was just a real loss for all of us," Ellen said. She worried in particular about their youngest daughter, Saoirse. "One of my sorrows about the whole thing was that, the other kids knew who he was," she said. "They'll do his sayings and recite his poems and do all that. And Saoirse doesn't have that."

On top of the pain, Ellen said, she feels the loss of the activism they never got to perform together. "I felt like we were coming to a place in our lives where he would be free to do a Plowshares action again. And that didn't happen."

Ellen was left to raise Saoirse, who was six at the time, alone. While she hasn't participated in another Plowshares action, she did continue to risk arrest. And it was jail, once again, that brought Ellen into the Seneca Lake campaign, when Steingraber, the renowned anti-fracking activist in town, landed behind bars just as Ellen completed her own 15-day sentence for protesting against drones at a nearby military base. The two sentences helped reveal a parallel, Ellen said, between civilians who get caught in war and people who live in the way of drilling or pipeline projects.

### **An Inconvenient Protest**

Supporters of the gas project say its opponents have exaggerated the risks. "You've got two major salt plants that have been in existence forever and we've had tourism flourish over the past 30 years," said Dennis A. Fagan, chairman of the Schuyler County Legislature, which in 2014 [passed a resolution](#) 5-3 in support of the project. Rejecting the expansion, he said, could lead Crestwood, the owner, to pull out of the county and hurt the local economy. "When they talk about industrialization, I don't think they know what they're talking about," he said. "It's a scare tactic."

Even Fagan acknowledges, however, that the actions may be achieving their goal. So far, 401 people have taken part in 657 arrests. Of those, 414 cases remain open while most of the rest have been dismissed.

"The cases are clearly clogging up the system," District Attorney Joseph Fazzary wrote in an email. His office may have to contest more than 80 trials for the protests, which he said will draw his staff away from criminal cases.

The application with the state to store liquid petroleum gas is now eight years old and has yet to receive a ruling. The matter has been awaiting a decision from an administrative law judge for more than a year. In a letter to the judge on August 8, the company said it would [amend its proposal](#) to address public concerns, reducing its size and eliminating planned rail and truck terminals. A spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Conservation declined to comment, citing that proceeding.

Crestwood has made no move to begin construction on the natural gas project, two years after it was approved.

Elsewhere, civil disobedience has helped draw attention to many fossil fuel projects, with the Keystone XL pipeline the most prominent among them. Cuomo's administration recently [rejected a permit for the Constitution Pipeline](#) and has [urged federal officials to suspend construction](#) on the interstate pipeline opposed by Resist AIM, the protest group. Over the past year, at least two dozen fossil fuel projects [have been rejected or canceled across the country](#).

### Thy Will be Done

After the protest at the gates in May, the 21 people who had been arrested filtered out of the Schuylers County Sheriff's Department later that morning, gathering on a strip of grass between the low-slung building and the road. They seemed energized, "uncommonly cheerful in that place of penitence," as Daniel Berrigan wrote about his arrest following the first Plowshares action.

Many activists, given the privileged position of choosing to get arrested, describe an entirely different relationship with prison than that experience by most Americans who land behind bars. Members of the Plowshares movement have referred to such lawbreaking as "divine obedience." In the words of Dorothy Day, "We are trying to say with action, 'Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven.'"

Teresa Grady recalls her time in prison in similarly spiritual terms.

"You look at life I think in some ways in a lot freer way, than when you're kind of constrained by having to work and pay bills," she said. "It's a freedom, I don't know how else to describe it."

Ellen's and Clare's first arrest at Seneca Lake came after Pope Francis published the environmental encyclical last summer. Ellen was inspired to "enflesh" his message, so she and several other Catholic Workers built a 7-foot replica of the letter and carried it to the gates. Videos from the day show them reading from the document and [singing in Latin from the Catholic canon](#).

*Dona Nobis Pacem*



*Dona Nobis Pacem, Pacem*

They continue singing—grant us peace—as a deputy begins telling them they are under arrest and ordering them to put down the papal letter. They do not stop singing.

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/09082016/new-york-fracking-ban-we-are-seneca-lake-protests-crestwood-natural-gas-plowshares-into-swords-nuclear>

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**August 15, 2016**

A World at War

We're under attack from climate change—and our only hope is to mobilize like we did in WWII.

By Bill McKibben  
New Republic

In the North this summer, a devastating offensive is underway. Enemy forces have seized huge swaths of territory; with each passing week, another 22,000 square miles of Arctic ice [disappears](#). Experts dispatched to the battlefield in July saw little cause for hope, especially since this siege is one of the oldest fronts in the war. “In 30 years, the area has shrunk approximately by half,” said a scientist who examined the onslaught. “There doesn't seem anything able to stop this.”

In the Pacific this spring, the enemy staged a daring breakout across thousands of miles of ocean, waging a full-scale [assault](#) on the region's coral reefs. In a matter of months, long stretches of formations like the Great Barrier Reef—dating back past the start of human civilization and visible from space—were reduced to [white bone-yards](#).

Day after day, week after week, saboteurs behind our lines are unleashing a series of brilliant and overwhelming attacks. In the past few months alone, our foes have used a firestorm to force the total [evacuation](#) of a city of 90,000 in Canada, drought to ravage crops to the point where southern Africans are literally eating their seed corn, and floods to threaten the priceless repository of art in the [Louvre](#). The enemy is even deploying biological weapons to spread psychological terror: The [Zika virus](#), loaded like a bomb into a growing army of mosquitoes, has shrunk the heads of newborn babies across an entire continent; panicked health ministers in seven countries are now [urging](#) women not to get pregnant. And as in all conflicts, millions of [refugees](#) are fleeing the horrors of [war](#), their numbers swelling daily as they're forced to abandon their homes to escape famine and desolation and disease.

World War III is well and truly underway. And we are losing.

For years, our leaders chose to ignore the warnings of our [best scientists](#) and top [military strategists](#). Global warming, they told us, was beginning a stealth campaign that would lay waste to vast stretches of the planet, uprooting and killing millions of innocent civilians. But instead of

paying heed and taking obvious precautions, we chose to strengthen the enemy with our endless combustion; a billion explosions of a billion pistons inside a billion cylinders have fueled a global threat as lethal as the mushroom-shaped nuclear explosions we long feared. Carbon and methane now represent the deadliest enemy of all time, the first force fully capable of harrying, scattering, and impoverishing our entire civilization.

We're used to war as metaphor: the war on [poverty](#), the war on drugs, the war on cancer. Usually this is just a rhetorical device, a way of saying, "We need to focus our attention and marshal our forces to fix something we don't like." But this is no metaphor. By most of the ways we measure wars, climate change is the real deal: Carbon and methane are seizing physical territory, sowing havoc and panic, racking up casualties, and even [destabilizing](#) governments. (Over the past few years, record-setting droughts have helped undermine the brutal strongman of Syria and fuel the rise of [Boko Haram](#) in Nigeria.) It's not that global warming is *like* a world war. It *is* a world war. Its first [victims](#), ironically, are those who have done the least to cause the crisis. But it's a world war aimed at us all. And if we lose, we will be as decimated and helpless as the losers in every conflict--except that this time, there will be no winners, and no end to the planetwide occupation that follows.

The question is not, are we in a world war? The question is, will we fight back? And if we do, can we actually defeat an enemy as powerful and inexorable as the laws of physics?

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To answer those questions—to assess, honestly and objectively, our odds of victory in this new world war—we must look to the last one.

For four years, the United States was focused on a single, all-consuming goal, to the exclusion of any other concern: defeating the global threat posed by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Unlike Adolf Hitler, the last force to pose a planetwide threat to civilization, our enemy today is neither sentient nor evil. But before the outbreak of World War II, the world's leaders committed precisely the same mistake we are making today—they tried first to ignore their foe, and then to appease him.

Eager to sidestep the conflict, England initially treated the Nazis as rational actors, assuming that they would play by the existing rules of the game. That's why Neville Chamberlain came home from Munich to cheering crowds: Constrained by Britain's military weakness and imperial overreach, he did what he thought necessary to satisfy Hitler. Surely, the thinking went, the dictator would now see reason.

But Hitler was playing by his own set of rules, which meant he had contempt for the political "realism" of other leaders. (Indeed, it meant their realism wasn't.) Carbon and methane, by contrast, offer not contempt but complete indifference: They couldn't care less about our insatiable desires as consumers, or the sunk cost of our fossil fuel infrastructure, or the geostrategic location of the petro-states, or any of the host of excuses that have so far constrained our response to global warming. The world came back from signing the climate accord in [Paris](#) last December exactly as Chamberlain returned from Munich: [hopeful](#), even exhilarated, that a

major threat had finally been tackled. Paul Krugman, summing up the world's conventional wisdom, post-Paris, [concluded](#) that climate change “can be avoided with fairly modest, politically feasible steps. You may want a revolution, but we don't need one to save the planet.” All it would take, he insisted, is for America to implement Obama's plan for clean power, and to continue “guiding the world as a whole toward sharp reductions in emissions,” as it had in Paris.

This is, simply put, as wrong as Chamberlain's “peace in our time.” Even if every nation in the world complies with the Paris Agreement, the world will heat up by as much as 3.5 degrees Celsius by 2100—not the 1.5 to 2 degrees promised in the pact's preamble. And it may be too late already to meet that stated target: We actually flirted with that [1.5 degree](#) line at the height of the El Niño warming in February, a mere 60 days after the world's governments solemnly pledged their best efforts to slow global warming. Our leaders have been anticipating what French strategists in World War II called the *guerre du longue durée*, even as each new edition of *Science* or *Nature* makes clear that climate change is mounting an all-out blitzkrieg, setting new [record](#) highs for global temperatures in each of the past 14 months.

Not long after Paris, earth scientists announced that the West Antarctic ice sheet is nowhere near as stable as we had hoped; if we keep pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, it will shed ice much faster than previous research had predicted. At an insurance industry conference in April, a federal official [described](#) the new data as “an OMG thing.” “The long-term effect,” *The New York Times* [reported](#), “would likely be to drown the world's coastlines, including many of its great cities.” If Nazis were the ones threatening destruction on such a global scale today, America and its allies would already be mobilizing for a full-scale war.

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The Antarctic research did contain, as the *Times* reported, one morsel of good news. Yes, following the Paris accord would doom much of the Antarctic—but a “far more stringent effort to limit emissions of greenhouse gases would stand a fairly good chance of saving West Antarctica from collapse.”

What would that “far more stringent effort” require? For years now, climate scientists and leading economists have called for treating climate change with the same resolve we brought to bear on Germany and Japan in the last world war. In July, the Democratic Party issued a [platform](#) that called for a World War II–type national mobilization to save civilization from the “catastrophic consequences” of a “global climate emergency.” In fact, Hillary Clinton's negotiators agreed to plans for an urgent summit “in the first hundred days of the next administration” where the president will convene “the world's best engineers, climate scientists, policy experts, activists, and indigenous communities to chart a course to solve the climate crisis.”

But what would that actually look like? What would it mean to mobilize for World War III on the same scale as we did for the last world war?

As it happens, American scientists have been engaged in a quiet but concentrated effort to figure out how quickly existing technology can be deployed to defeat global warming; a modest start, in

effect, for a mighty Manhattan Project. Mark Z. [Jacobson](#), a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University and the director of its Atmosphere and Energy Program, has been working for years with a team of experts to calculate precisely how each of the 50 states could power itself from renewable resources. The [numbers](#) are remarkably detailed: In Alabama, for example, residential rooftops offer a total of 59.7 square kilometers that are unshaded by trees and pointed in the right direction for solar panels. Taken together, Jacobson's work demonstrates conclusively that America could generate 80 to 85 percent of its power from sun, wind, and water by 2030, and 100 percent by 2050. In the past year, the Stanford team has offered similar [plans](#) for 139 nations around the world.

The research delves deep into the specifics of converting to clean energy. Would it take too much land? The Stanford numbers show that you would need about four-tenths of one percent of America's landmass to produce enough renewable energy, mostly from sprawling solar power stations. Do we have enough raw materials? "We looked at that in some detail and we aren't too worried," says Jacobson. "For instance, you need neodymium for wind turbines—but there's seven times more of it than you'd need to power half the world. Electric cars take lithium for batteries—but there's enough lithium just in the known resources for three billion cars, and at the moment we only have 800 million."

But would the Stanford plan be enough to slow global warming? Yes, says Jacobson: If we move quickly enough to meet the goal of 80 percent clean power by 2030, then the world's carbon dioxide levels would fall below the relative safety of 350 parts per million by the end of the century. The planet would stop heating up, or at least the pace of that heating would slow substantially. That's as close to winning this war as we could plausibly get. We'd endure lots of damage in the meantime, but not the civilization-scale destruction we currently face. (Even if all of the world's nations meet the pledges they made in the Paris accord, carbon dioxide is currently on a path to [hit](#) 500 or 600 parts per million by century's end—a path if not to hell, then to someplace with a similar setting on the thermostat.)

To make the Stanford plan work, you would need to build a hell of a lot of factories to turn out thousands of acres of solar panels, and wind turbines the length of football fields, and millions and millions of electric cars and buses. But here again, experts have already begun to crunch the numbers. Tom Solomon, a retired engineer who oversaw the construction of one of the largest factories built in recent years—Intel's mammoth Rio Rancho semiconductor plant in New Mexico—took Jacobson's research and calculated how much clean energy America would need to produce by 2050 to completely replace fossil fuels. The answer: 6,448 gigawatts.

"Last year we installed 16 gigawatts of clean power," Solomon says. "So at that pace, it would take 405 years. Which is kind of too long."

So Solomon did the math to figure out how many factories it would take to produce 6,448 gigawatts of clean energy in the next 35 years. He started by looking at SolarCity, a clean-energy company that is currently building the nation's biggest solar panel factory in [Buffalo](#). "They're calling it the giga-factory," Solomon says, "because the panels it builds will produce one gigawatt worth of solar power every year." Using the SolarCity plant as a rough yardstick,

Solomon calculates that America needs 295 solar factories of a similar size to defeat climate change—roughly six per state—plus a similar effort for wind turbines.

Building these factories doesn't require any new technology. In fact, the effort would be much the same as the one that Solomon oversaw at Intel's semiconductor factory in New Mexico: Pick a site with good roads and a good technical school nearby to supply the workforce; find trained local contractors who can deal with everything from rebar to HVAC; get the local permits; order long-lead-time items like I-beam steel; level the ground and excavate; lay foundations and floors; build walls, columns, and a roof; "facilitate each of the stations for factory machine tooling with plumbing, piping, and electrical wiring"; and train a workforce of 1,500. To match the flow of panels needed to meet the Stanford targets, in the most intense years of construction we need to erect 30 of these solar panel factories a year, plus another 15 for making wind turbines. "It's at the upper end of what I could possibly imagine," Solomon says.

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Turning out more solar panels and wind turbines may not sound like warfare, but it's exactly what won World War II: not just massive invasions and pitched tank battles and ferocious aerial bombardments, but the wholesale industrial retooling that was needed to build weapons and supply troops on a previously unprecedented scale. Defeating the Nazis required more than brave soldiers. It required building big factories, and building them really, really fast.

In 1941, the world's largest industrial plant under a single roof went up in six months near Ypsilanti, Michigan; Charles Lindbergh called it the "Grand Canyon of the mechanized world." Within months, it was churning out a B-24 Liberator bomber every hour. Bombers! Huge, complicated planes, endlessly more intricate than solar panels or turbine blades—containing 1,225,000 parts, 313,237 rivets. Nearby, in Warren, Michigan, the Army built a tank factory faster than they could build the power plant to run it—so they simply towed a steam locomotive into one end of the building to provide steam heat and electricity. That one factory produced more tanks than the Germans built in the entire course of the war.

It wasn't just weapons. In another corner of Michigan, a radiator company landed a contract for more than 20 million steel helmets; not far away, a rubber factory retooled to produce millions of helmet *liners*. The company that used to supply fabrics for Ford's seat cushions went into parachute production. Nothing went to waste--when car companies stopped making cars for the duration of the fighting, GM found it had thousands of 1939 model-year ashtrays piled up in inventory. So it shipped them out to Seattle, where Boeing put them in long-range bombers headed for the Pacific. Pontiac made anti-aircraft guns; Oldsmobile churned out cannons; Studebaker built engines for Flying Fortresses; Nash-Kelvinator produced propellers for British de Havillands; Hudson Motors fabricated wings for Helldivers and P-38 fighters; Buick manufactured tank destroyers; Fisher Body built thousands of M4 Sherman tanks; Cadillac turned out more than 10,000 light tanks. And that was just Detroit—the same sort of industrial mobilization took place all across America.

According to the conventional view of World War II, American business made all this happen simply because it rolled up its sleeves and went to war. As is so often the case, however, the

conventional view is mostly wrong. Yes, there are endless newsreels from the era of patriotic businessmen unrolling blueprints and switching on assembly lines—but that’s largely because those businessmen paid for the films. Their PR departments also put out their own radio serials with titles like “Victory Is Their Business,” and “War of Enterprise,” and published endless newspaper ads boasting of their own patriotism. In reality, many of America’s captains of industry didn’t want much to do with the war until they were dragooned into it. Henry Ford, who built and managed that Ypsilanti bomber plant, was an America Firster who urged his countrymen to stay out of the war; the Chamber of Commerce (now a leading opponent of climate action) fought to block FDR’s Lend-Lease program to help the imperiled British. “American businessmen oppose American involvement in any foreign war,” the Chamber’s president explained to Congress.

Luckily, Roosevelt had a firm enough grip on Congress to overcome the Chamber, and he took the lead in gearing up America for the battles to come. Mark Wilson, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has just finished a decade-long study of the mobilization effort, entitled *Destructive Creation*. It details how the federal government birthed a welter of new agencies with names like the War Production Board and the Defense Plant Corporation; the latter, between 1940 and 1945, spent \$9 billion on 2,300 projects in 46 states, building factories it then leased to private industry. By war’s end, the government had a dominant position in everything from aircraft manufacturing to synthetic rubber production.

“It was public capital that built most of the stuff, not Wall Street,” says Wilson. “And at the top level of logistics and supply-chain management, the military was the boss. They placed the contracts, they moved the stuff around.” The feds acted aggressively—they would cancel contracts as war needs changed, tossing factories full of people abruptly out of work. If firms refused to take direction, FDR ordered many of them seized. Though companies made money, there was little in the way of profiteering—bad memories from World War I, Wilson says, led to “robust profit controls,” which were mostly accepted by America’s industrial tycoons. In many cases, federal authorities purposely set up competition between public operations and private factories: The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard built submarines, but so did Electric Boat of Groton, Connecticut. “They were both quite impressive and productive,” Wilson says.

“Usually, when people from different worlds are dealing with each other, they get into conflicts and then dig in their heels deeper,” Berk says. “But because the stakes are so high and it’s moving so fast, no one doubts that if you don’t get a handle on this battle in the Atlantic, then the immediate consequences will be really grave. So they’re willing to do this kind of pragmatic trial and error. They start to see that ‘I can’t dig in my heels—I need this other person to learn from.’” In the face of a common enemy, Americans worked together in a way they never had before.

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That attitude quickly reset after the war, of course; solidarity gave way to the biggest boom in personal consumption the world had ever seen, as car-packed suburbs sprawled from every city and women were retired to the kitchen. Business, eager to redeem its isolationist image and shake off New Deal restrictions, sold itself as the hero of the war effort, patriotic industrialists who had overcome mountains of government red tape to get the job done. And the modest

“operations researchers,” who had entered and learned from the real world when they managed radar development during the war, retreated to their ivory towers and became much grander “systems analysts” once the conflict ended. Robert McNamara, a former Ford executive, brought an entire wing of the Rand Corporation to the Defense Department during the Kennedy administration, where the think-tank experts promptly privatized most of the government shipyards and plane factories, and used their out-of-touch computer models to screw up government programs like Model Cities, the ambitious attempt at urban rehabilitation during the War on Poverty. “The systems analysts completely took over,” Berk says, “and the program largely failed for that reason.”

Today we live in the privatized, siloed, business-dominated world that took root under McNamara and flourished under Reagan. The actual wars we fight are marked by profiteering, and employ as many private contractors as they do soldiers. Our spirit of social solidarity is, to put it mildly, thin. (The modern-day equivalent of Father Coughlin is now the Republican candidate for president.) So it’s reasonable to ask if we can find the collective will to fight back in this war against global warming, as we once fought fascism.

For starters, it’s important to remember that a truly global mobilization to defeat climate change wouldn’t wreck our economy or throw coal miners out of work. Quite the contrary: Gearing up to stop global warming would provide a host of social and economic benefits, just as World War II did. It would save lives. (A worldwide switch to renewable energy would cut air pollution deaths by 4 to 7 million a year, according to the Stanford data.) It would produce an awful lot of jobs. (An estimated net gain of roughly two million in the United States alone.) It would provide safer, better-paying employment to energy workers. (A new study by Michigan Technological University found that we could retrain everyone in the coal fields to work in solar power for as little as \$181 million, and the guy installing solar panels on a roof averages about \$4,000 more a year than the guy risking his life down in the hole.) It would rescue the world’s struggling economies. (British economist Nicholas Stern [calculates](#) that the economic impacts of unchecked global warming could far exceed those of the world wars or the Great Depression.) And fighting this war would be socially transformative. (Just as World War II sped up the push for racial and gender equality, a climate campaign should focus its first efforts on the frontline communities most poisoned by the fossil fuel era. It would help ease income inequality with higher employment, revive our hollowed-out rural states with wind farms, and transform our decaying suburbs with real investments in public transit.)

There are powerful forces, of course, that stand in the way of a full-scale mobilization. If you add up every last coal mine and filling station in the world, governments and corporations have spent \$20 trillion on fossil fuel infrastructure. “No country will walk away from such investments,” [writes](#) Vaclav Smil, a Canadian energy expert. As investigative journalists have shown over the past year, the oil giant Exxon [knew](#) all about global warming for decades—yet spent millions to spread climate-denial propaganda. The only way to overcome that concerted opposition—from the very same industrial forces that opposed America’s entry into World War II—is to adopt a wartime mentality, rewriting the old mindset that stands in the way of victory. “The first step is we have to win,” says Jonathan Koomey, an energy researcher at Stanford University. “That is, we have to have broad acceptance among the broader political community that we need urgent action, not just nibbling around the edges, which is what the D.C. crowd still thinks.”

That political will is starting to build, just as it began to gather in the years before Pearl Harbor. A widespread movement has killed off the [Keystone](#) pipeline, stymied Arctic drilling, and [banned](#) fracking in key states and countries. As one oil industry official lamented in July, “The ‘keep-it-in-the-ground’ campaign” has “controlled the conversation.” This resembles, at least a little, the way FDR actually started gearing up for war 18 months before the “date which will live in infamy.” The ships and planes that won the Battle of Midway six months into 1942 had all been built before the Japanese attacked Hawaii. “By the time of Pearl Harbor,” Wilson says, “the government had pretty much solved the problem of organization. After that, they just said, ‘We’re going to have to make twice as much.’”

Pearl Harbor *did* make individual Americans willing to do hard things: pay more in taxes, buy billions upon billions in war bonds, endure the shortages and disruptions that came when the country’s entire economy converted to wartime production. Use of public transit went up 87 percent during the war, as Naomi Klein points out in *This Changes Everything*; 40 percent of the nation’s vegetables were grown in victory gardens. For the first time, women and minorities were able to get good factory jobs; Rosie the Riveter changed our sense of what was possible.

Without a Pearl Harbor, in fact, there was only so much even FDR could have accomplished. So far, there has been no equivalent in the climate war—no single moment that galvanizes the world to realize that nothing short of total war will save civilization. Perhaps the closest we’ve come to FDR’s “date of infamy” speech—and it wasn’t all that close—was when [Bernie Sanders](#), in the first debate, was asked to name the biggest security threat facing the planet. “Climate change,” he replied—prompting all the usual suspects to tut-tut that he was soft on “radical Islamic terrorism.” Then, in the second debate, the question came up again, a day after the Paris massacres. “Do you still believe that?” the moderator asked, in gotcha mode. “Absolutely,” [replied](#) Sanders, who then proceeded to give an accurate account of how record drought will lead to international instability.

Had he won, it’s possible that Bernie could have combined his focus on jobs and climate and infrastructure into some kind of overarching effort that really mattered—he was, after all, the presidential candidate most comfortable with big government since FDR. Donald Trump, of course, will dodge this war just as he did Vietnam. He thinks (if that’s actually the right verb) that climate change is a [hoax](#) manufactured by the Chinese, who apparently in their Oriental slyness convinced the polar ice caps to go along with their conspiracy. Clinton’s advisers originally promised there would be a “climate war room” in her White House, but then corrected the record: It would actually be a “[climate map room](#),” which sounds somewhat less gung ho.

In fact, one of the lowest points in my years of fighting climate change came in late June, when I sat on the commission appointed to draft the Democratic Party platform. (I was a Sanders appointee, alongside Cornel West and other luminaries.) At 11 p.m. on a Friday night, in a mostly deserted hotel ballroom in St. Louis, I was given an hour to offer nine amendments to the platform to address climate change. More bike paths passed by unanimous consent, but all the semi-hard things that might begin to make a real difference—a fracking ban, a carbon tax, a prohibition against drilling or mining fossil fuels on public lands, a climate litmus test for new developments, an end to World Bank financing of fossil fuel plants—were [defeated by 7–6 tallies](#), with the Clinton appointees voting as a bloc. They were quite concerned about climate



change, they insisted, but a “[phased-down](#)” approach would be best. There was the faintest whiff of Munich about it. Like Chamberlain, these were all good and concerned people, just the sort of steady, evenhanded folks you’d like to have leading your nation in normal times. But they misunderstood the nature of the enemy. Like fascism, climate change is one of those rare crises that gets stronger if you don’t attack. In every war, there are very real tipping points, past which victory, or even a draw, will become impossible. And when the enemy manages to decimate some of the planet’s oldest and most essential physical features—a polar ice cap, say, or the Pacific’s coral reefs—that’s a pretty good sign that a tipping point is near. In this war that we’re in—the war that physics is fighting hard, and that we aren’t—winning slowly is exactly the same as losing.

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To my surprise, things changed a couple weeks later, when the final deliberations over the Democratic platform were held in Orlando. While Clinton’s negotiators still wouldn’t support a ban on fracking or a carbon tax, they did [agree](#) we needed to “price” carbon, that wind and sun should be given priority over natural gas, and that any federal policy that worsened global warming should be rejected.

Maybe it was polls showing that Bernie voters—especially young ones—have been slow to sign on to the Clinton campaign. Maybe the [hottest June](#) in American history had opened some minds. But you could, if you squinted, create a hopeful scenario. Clinton, for instance, [promised](#) that America will install half a billion solar panels in the next four years. That’s not so far off the curve that Tom Solomon calculates we need to hit. And if we do it by building solar factories of our own, rather than importing cheap foreign-made panels, we’ll be positioning America as the world’s dominant power in clean energy, just as our mobilization in World War II ensured our economic might for two generations. If we don’t get there first, others will: Driven by anger over smog-choked cities, the Chinese have already begun installing renewable energy at [a world-beating rate](#).

“It would be a grave mistake for the United States to wait for another nation to take the lead in combating the global climate emergency,” the Democratic [platform](#) asserts. “We are committed to a national mobilization, and to leading a global effort to mobilize nations to address this threat on a scale not seen since World War II.”

The next president doesn’t have to wait for a climate equivalent of Pearl Harbor to galvanize Congress. Much of what we need to do can—and must—be accomplished immediately, through the same use of executive action that FDR relied on to lay the groundwork for a wider mobilization. The president could immediately put a halt to drilling and mining on public lands and waters, which contain at least half of all the untapped carbon left in America. She could slow the build-out of the natural gas system simply by correcting the outmoded way the EPA calculates the warming effect of methane, just as Obama [reined in](#) coal-fired power plants. She could tell her various commissioners to put a stop to the federal practice of rubber-stamping new fossil fuel projects, rejecting those that would “significantly exacerbate” global warming. She could instruct every federal agency to buy all their power from green sources and rely exclusively on plug-in cars, creating new markets overnight. She could set a price on carbon for

her agencies to follow internally, even without the congressional action that probably won't be forthcoming. And just as FDR brought in experts from the private sector to plan for the defense build-out, she could get the blueprints for a full-scale climate mobilization in place even as she rallies the political will to make them plausible. Without the same urgency and foresight displayed by FDR—without immediate executive action—we will lose this war.

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Normally in wartime, defeatism is a great sin. Luckily, though, you can't give aid and comfort to carbon; it has no morale to boost. So we can be totally honest. We've waited so long to fight back in this war that total victory is impossible, and total defeat can't be ruled out.

While the Democrats were meeting in that depressing St. Louis hotel room last June, I had my laptop open. Even as they voted down one measure after another to combat climate change, news kept coming in from the front lines:

In [Japan](#), 700,000 people were told to evacuate their homes after record rainfall led to severe flooding and landslides. The deluge continued for five days; at its peak, nearly six inches of rain were falling every hour.

In California, thousands of homes were threatened in a [wildfire](#) described by the local fire chief as “one of the most devastating I've ever seen.” Suburban tracts looked like Dresden after the bombing. Planes and helicopters buzzed overhead, dropping bright plumes of chemical retardants; if the “Flight of the Valkyries” had been playing, it could have been a scene from *Apocalypse Now*.

And in [West Virginia](#), a “one in a thousand year” storm dropped historic rain across the mountains, triggering record floods that killed dozens. “You can see people in the second-story windows waiting to be evacuated,” one local official [reported](#). A particularly dramatic [video](#)—a kind of YouTube *Guernica* for our moment—showed a large house being consumed by flames as it was swept down a rampaging river until it crashed into a bridge. “Everybody lost everything,” one dazed resident said. “We never thought it would be this bad.” A state trooper was even more succinct. “It looks like a war zone,” he said.

Because it is.

*Want to join the fight against climate change? Sign up on 350.org [here](#).*

Bill McKibben is the Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College and co-founder of the climate group 350.org.

Illustrations by Andrew Colin Beck

<https://newrepublic.com/article/135684/declare-war-climate-change-mobilize-wwii>

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**August 15, 2016**

Dakota Access Pipeline Standoff: Mni Wiconi, Water is Life

By Valerie Taliman  
Indian Country Today Media Network

The controversial Dakota Access Pipeline project is back in the news. Over the weekend, tribal activists faced off against lines of police in Hunkpapa Territory near Cannon Ball as construction crews prepared to break ground for the new pipeline, while Standing Rock Sioux governmental officials resolved to broaden their legal battle to stop the project.

On July 26, 2016 the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe was stunned to learn that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had given its approval for the pipeline to run within a half-mile of the reservation without proper consultation or consent. Also, the new 1,172 mile Dakota Access Pipeline will cross Lake Oahe (formed by Oahe Dam on the Missouri) and the Missouri River as well, and disturb burial grounds and sacred sites on the tribe's ancestral Treaty lands, according to SRST officials.

Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners will build, own and operate the proposed \$3.78 billion Dakota Access Pipeline and plans to transport up to 570,000 barrels of crude oil fracked from the Bakken oil fields across four states to a market hub in Illinois. The pipeline—already facing widespread opposition by a coalition of farmers, ranchers and environmental groups—will cross 209 rivers, creeks and tributaries, according to Dakota Access, LLC.

Standing Rock Sioux leaders say the pipeline will threaten the Missouri River, the tribe's main source of drinking and irrigation water, and forever destroy burial grounds and sacred sites.

“We don't want this black snake within our Treaty boundaries,” said Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault II. “We need to stop this pipeline that threatens our water. We have said repeatedly we don't want it here. We want the Army Corps to honor the same rights and protections that were afforded to others, rights we were never afforded when it comes to our territories. We demand the pipeline be stopped and kept off our Treaty boundaries.”

On July 27, SRST filed litigation in federal court in the District of Columbia to challenge the actions of the Corps regarding the Dakota Access pipeline. The suit seeks to enforce the tribal nation's federally protected rights and interests. The nation is seeking a preliminary injunction to undo the Corps' approval of the pipeline at a hearing on August 24. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and several other native nations have asked to join the lawsuit.

On August 8, Dakota Access called the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to give 48-hour notice that construction would begin on August 10 for an access corridor and staging area where pipes and other equipment will be stored for construction.

As news of the planned construction spread via social media among tribal citizens and activists, a grass-roots gathering assembled at what is now being referred to as the Sacred Stone Camp

where people are holding the line to stop construction. After Dakota Access workers began clearing an area for preliminary pipeline work, several hundred protestors gradually assembled at the site, prompting law enforcement to intervene and arrest more than a dozen people. Among those were Chairman Archambault (in orange shirt in below video) and SRST Councilman Dana Yellow Fat, who quickly posted bond and were released.

“We have a voice, and we are here using it collectively in a respectful and peaceful manner,” Archambault said. “The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is doing everything it can legally, through advocacy and by speaking directly to the powers that be who could have helped us before construction began. This has happened over and over, and we will not continue to be completely ignored and let the Army Corps of Engineers ride roughshod over our rights.”

Archambault said the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires free, prior and informed consent for development impacting Indian land, territories and waters.

“We have a serious obligation, a core responsibility to our people and to our children, to protect our source of water,” he said. “Our people will receive no benefits from this pipeline, yet we are paying the ultimate price for it with our water. We will not stop asking the federal government and Army Corps to end their attacks on our water and our people.”

The proposed construction route is within a half-mile of the tribe’s reservation border, sparking concerns for protection of cultural resources that remain with the land. Hunkpapa religious and cultural sites are situated along the route of the pipeline, including burial sites of ancestors.

“The land between the Cannonball River and the Heart River is sacred,” said Jon Eagle Sr., STST’s Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. “It’s a historic place of commerce where enemy tribes camped peacefully within sight of each other because of the reverence they had for this place. In the area are sacred stones where our ancestors went to pray for good direction, strength and protection for the coming year. Those stones are still there, and our people still go there today.”

Eagle worries that the pipeline will harm many tribal nations along the Missouri.

“Wherever the buffalo roamed our ancestors left evidence of their existence and connection to everything in creation,” he said. “The aboriginal lands of the Oceti Sakonwin extend as far west as Wyoming and Montana, as far north as Canada, as far east as the Great Lakes, and as far south as Kansas. Construction along this corridor will disturb burial places and cultural sites.”

According to the recently filed “motion for preliminary injunction” by the SRST, Dakota Access initially considered two possible routes: a northern route near Bismarck, and a southern route taking the pipeline to the border of the Standing Rock reservation. Federal law requires the Army Corps to review and deny or grant the company’s permit applications to construct the pipeline. The southern route takes the pipeline across the Missouri River and Lake Oahe, implicating lands and water under federal jurisdiction.

In the initial environmental assessment, the maps utilized by Dakota Access and the Army Corps did not indicate that SRST's lands were close to the proposed Lake Oahe crossing. The company selected this route because the northern route "would be near and could jeopardize the drinking water of the residents in the city of Bismarck." The Army Corps of Engineers has not issued a public response to the newly filed litigation or protest. In a statement that appeared in a May 4 story in the [DesMoines Register](#), Col. John Henderson, commander of the Corps' Omaha District said, "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is not an opponent or a proponent of the project. Our job is to consider impacts to the public and the environment as well as all applicable laws, regulations and policies associated yet with this permission and permit review process."

An Energy Transfer spokesperson told ICTMN, "It is important to note that Dakota Access does not cross any reservation land and is compliant with all regulations regarding tribal coordination and cultural resources. We have communicated with the various tribes that have an interest in the DAPL project as we recognize the traditional range of the Native Americans and their sensitivity to historic ranges for cultural properties. We are confident the USACE has adequately addressed the portion of the project subject to their review and where a NEPA analysis is required. They are the experts in this area, and we believe they have done an excellent job addressing any comments received to date."

Tribal leaders and environmental activists say the company's draft environmental assessment of December 9, 2015 did not mention that the route they chose brings the pipeline near the drinking water of tribal citizens. In fact, it omitted the existence of the tribe on all maps and analysis, in violation of environmental justice policies.

While federal law requires meaningful consultation with affected Indian nations, SRST governmental officials allege that didn't happen despite numerous requests by the nation. Since they first heard of the proposed project in 2014, SRST leaders have voiced strong opposition to company, state and federal officials, and to Congress.

They met with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to discuss the harm imposed by the pipeline. All three agencies subsequently wrote letters to the Army Corps expressing environmental and cultural resource concerns related to the pipeline.

Archambault said they've been working on many levels for more than seven months to stop construction. But the tribe and the three federal agencies were apparently ignored by the Army Corps, which moved ahead with permits for the pipeline.

In addition, Standing Rock youth ages 6–25 from the reservation vowed to run to Washington, D.C. to deliver a petition with 160,000 signatures on [change.org](#) opposing the pipeline to the President of the United States. After running for 2,200 miles, they were able to meet with Army Corps officials and hold rallies along the way; they returned home on August 10.

Standing Rock leadership has also put out the call to Indian country to stand in support of protecting their water, land and people. Dozens of Indian nations have already written letters and resolutions to support the Lakota people.

As for the growing number of people at the grassroots rally, Archambault publicly asked that everyone be peaceful and respectful of one another in the coming days.

“We want peaceful demonstrations and I need everyone to understand that what we are doing, in the manner we are doing it, is working,” he said. “By being peaceful and avoiding violence we are getting the attention needed to stop the pipeline.

“We’re getting the message out that all the wrongdoing that’s been done to Indian people will no longer be tolerated,” he said. “But we’re going about it in a peaceful and respectful manner. If we turn to violence, all that will be for nothing. I’m hoping and praying that through prayer and peace, for once the government will listen to us.”

Archambault also honored the Lakota youth who want to make a better future in his message.

“Our youth carry powerful messages when they speak, and we respect our youth and listen to them,” he said. “We honor and support the youth, runners, elders, campers, and supporters, and we are thankful for all the important efforts they’re making to protect our water.”

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/08/15/dakota-access-pipeline-standoff-mni-wiconi-water-life-165470>

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## **August 16, 2016**

Louisiana flooding displaces 20,000, Baton Rouge churches call for volunteers

By Catholic News Service  
National Catholic Reporter

As Louisiana's governor announced the federal government had declared a major disaster for the state Saturday, Catholic churches in the Baton Rouge diocese called for volunteers to help those displaced by extreme flooding and asked flood victims what assistance they needed.

Gov. John Bel Edwards told reporters at a news conference that about 20,000 people had been rescued from their homes and more than 10,000 people were in shelters after a slow-moving tropical storm system dumped nearly 2 feet of rain on southern Louisiana. Several rivers crested at record levels.

As of mid-morning Monday, state officials said at least six people have died in the floods.

Baton Rouge Bishop Robert Muench visited three evacuation shelters Monday to comfort evacuees. In a statement the day before, he dispensed Sunday Mass obligations for all Catholics affected by the storm and urged parishioners to limit their driving over the weekend because of "the inherent dangers of unsafe driving conditions."

"Please know of my prayers for your safety and the safety of your church parishes and parishioners," he said in a message to pastors.

On Friday Edwards declared a state of emergency for the state of Louisiana and deployed the Louisiana National Guard. He then requested that President Barack Obama issue a federal disaster declaration. With that declaration -- which initially affects four civil parishes, with more expected -- residents can seek assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. At least 18 civil parishes have declared a state of emergency, with more expected to do so.

"This is a serious event. It is ongoing. It is not over," Edwards told reporters. "We are not in control as far as how fast these floodwaters will recede, and in fact they are still going up in some places."

He said he traveled to affected areas and saw firsthand "the destruction caused by this unprecedented flood."

In a notice on its website, St. Jude the Apostle Catholic Church in East Baton Rouge civil parish called on parishioners available to volunteer to attend a morning meeting Monday to help with "flood relief planning and implementation."

"It is possible that a significant number of our parish staff are unable to leave their homes and come to work, so we will need to rely heavily on parish volunteers," the notice said.

At least two other Baton Rouge parishes, St. George and St. Aloysius, have set up Web pages asking flood victims to submit requests for help and asking others to list the kind of help they can provide.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/louisiana-flooding-displaces-20000-baton-rouge-churches-call-volunteers>

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## **August 16, 2016**

Marian devotees in Vietnam urged to take responsibility for environment

By Joachim Pham  
National Catholic Reporter

Catholics in the central Vietnamese diocese of Vinh who attended feast of the Assumption celebrations Aug. 15 were urged to help victims of marine pollution and to work to protect the environment.

Some 50,000 Catholics gathered in Xa Doai Cathedral and its square in Nghi Loc, Nghe An province for feast day celebrations. Among them were more than 1,500 parishioners who marched 5 kilometers from Nhan Hoa deanery to the cathedral, carrying banners reading "Close down Formosa," and "protecting the environment is protecting our life."

Fr. Joseph Nguyen Xuan Phuong, parish priest of Nhan Hoa, said they marched to protest the Taiwanese-built steel plant, a unit of Formosa Plastics, which allegedly discharged toxic waste, including phenol and cyanide, into the waters of four provinces, killing masses of fish in April. The plant is based in Ha Tinh province under the diocesan administration.

The priest said diocesan leaders asked Catholics to attend the feast of the Assumption celebrations to pray for national peace and prosperity, for the victims of the environmental disaster and that the country's leaders would protect the country.

In his homily, Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop of Vinh said Mother Mary loves, supports and consoles her children around the world. She is concerned about people's sufferings and the injustices they face, he said.

"As Catholics and citizens, we have responsibility for our nation and younger generations and are determined to build a fairer and more humane society, protect the environment and express our solidarity with victims of the environment disaster," Hop told the congregation.

He urged parishioners to "exercise your civil rights as allowed by law, to moderately request transparency of governing the country and dealing with the disaster from the government, and ask the government to bring those who caused the disaster to justice and compensate victims properly."

Vietnam's Natural Resources and Environment Minister Tran Hong Ha said July 29 that Formosa had paid the first half of a \$500 million fine that will be used to clean the water and compensate those affected. Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Nguyen Xuan Cuong said the ministry was counting the number of people whose livelihoods were hurt by the marine disaster.

Activists said the compensation is insufficient to pay the cost of cleaning the sea, a multi-year process, and to help hundreds of thousands of victims return to their normal life.

On Aug. 7, the diocese organized a "day for the environment" in all parishes to raise public awareness about environmental protection. They held Masses and the adoration of the Eucharist, conducted peaceful demonstrations and cleaned up garbage around the churches and parish buildings.

The diocese's Justice and Peace Commission organized the event.

On July 27, the commission also petitioned the government to provide emergency aid to fishermen. "Many fishermen get into heavy debt due to losing [their] income and having no work," it said.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/marian-devotees-vietnam-urged-take-responsibility-environment>

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**August 17, 2016**

World Culture Festival: Sri Sri event destroyed Yamuna's floodplain, biodiversity lost forever, expert panel to NGT

AOL rejects allegation, says it is asking tribunal to reconstitute panel of experts.

By Kaunain Sheriff M  
The Indian Express

A committee of experts, appointed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to assess the damage caused to the Yamuna floodplain in Delhi where the World Culture Festival of The Art of Living was held last March, has found that the "entire floodplain area used for the main event site" has been "completely destroyed" causing "invisible loss of biodiversity" that "may never be able to return".

In its report, submitted to the NGT on July 28, the seven-member panel, headed by Shashi Shekhar, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, said "the entire floodplain area used for the main event site, i.e. between the DND flyover and Barapullah drain (on the right bank of river Yamuna) has been completely destroyed, not simply destroyed. The ground is now totally levelled, compacted and hardened, totally devoid of water bodies or depressions, and almost completely devoid of any vegetation (except a few large cattails at the base of of the DND flyover)".

The committee pointed out that its members were "prevented from making any study and were forced to retreat by the AOL volunteers on the site" on April 15, and that they visited the site again on June 6 "for a visual assessment". It said its observations were supported by satellite images of the site taken on March 15 and May 10.

Reached for comments by [The Indian Express](#), The Art of Living, in a statement, said, "The NGT is yet to hear our application for reconstitution of the committee.

Hence, it is not logical to take the report of the committee into consideration before our application is heard. Taking all facts into consideration, it is clear that the allegation of environmental damage are unscientific, biased and unsustainable. We will submit our objections to the report in detail once we have had a chance to go through it."

*These are the key findings of the committee:*

\* The main event site has been "totally destroyed by complete clearing of all kinds of vegetation on the floodplain (and loss of all dependent biodiversity), filling in of water bodies and all depressions, dumping of debris and garbage followed by levelling and heavy compacting of the ground".

\* "Most of the ecosystem functions of natural wetlands have been completely lost... This is an 'invisible' loss of biodiversity which cannot be easily assessed, and most may never be able to

return. Far more significant changes are expected in the micro-organisms which are critical to the ecosystem functioning.”

\* “Construction of ramps and roads, filling up of water bodies and levelling of the ground together with compaction have almost completely eliminated the natural physical features and diversity of habitats.”

\* “Physical changes also occurred in the river channel due to the removal of riparian vegetation, construction of road and pontoon bridges, blocking of the side channel that would invariably disturb the flow and bottom sediments besides bringing in particulate material (sediments and organic matter) into it.”

\* “The simplification of habitat into a flat land has eliminated all water bodies in the impacted area – shallow or deep form naturally in the floodplain. These water bodies control floods, help groundwater recharge, support vegetation, fish and other biodiversity. Overall, the floodwater retention capacity of the area has been severely compromised.”

\* “The floodplain has lost almost all of its natural vegetation – trees, shrubs, reeds, tall grasses, aquatic vegetation including water hyacinth. The vegetation also includes numerous microscopic forms of algae, mosses and some ferns which inhabit the soil and water bodies. All of them have been destroyed in the area completely. Their total loss cannot be readily visualised and documented.”

\* “The vegetation provides habitat, food and sites for breeding/nesting to a large number and kinds of animals including birds, fishes, frogs, turtles, insects and innumerable bottom and mud-dwelling organisms (molluscs, earthworms, insects, and various other micro and macroscopic invertebrates). These organisms were rendered homeless, driven away by the intense activity and many were consigned to their graves under the debris.”

The committee has told the NGT that it is “necessary” to get a detailed project report prepared by an independent agency which will also estimate costs for a restoration plan.

On August 10, the NGT said, “We grant liberty to the committee to engage any specialised agency if they so desire for which the Ministry concerned, that is Ministry of Water Resources, shall bear the expense. Let a report, may be tentative with the regard to costing factor, be submitted to the tribunal within 45 days.”

The NGT will hear the matter next on September 28.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/art-of-living-sri-sri-ravi-shankar-yamuna-world-culture-festival-ngt-2979660/>

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**August 19, 2016**

LWF encouraged by member church action to review investments in fossil fuel companies

The Lutheran World Federation

*General Secretary Junge at Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

(LWI) – Key actions from the recent governing body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) included response to The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) call to its member churches to not invest in fossil fuels, advocacy for peace with justice in the Holy Land, and support towards migrants children and their families.

At its 8-13 August meeting in New Orleans, United States, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to review its respective social teachings and Corporate Social Responsibility policies and procedures “with the goal of not investing in, and removing the largest fossil fuel companies as identified by Carbon Tracker, and investing in corporations which are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment.”

Voting members also called for the church’s benefits and retirement services agency Portico “to evaluate the viability of an optional fossil-free fund for retirement plan participants.”

Addressing the Assembly prior to the vote, General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge explained LWF’s decision at the June 2015 Council meeting to not invest in companies engaged in or benefiting from fossil fuel-based activities was part of its commitment to climate justice. He said he was “very encouraged” by the “sense of urgency” with which the ELCA had taken up this call.

### **Responsibility for intergenerational justice**

“We don’t deal with climate change as an issue of abstraction, as an idea, but as an issue that is affecting sisters and brothers to whom we are linked up through communion relationships,” Junge noted, citing countries such as Brazil, Honduras, India, Myanmar and Namibia, often dealing with the reality of flooding and drought. “LWF knows about it. LWF feels about it, because it is touching the lives particularly of those most vulnerable,” he said.

The general secretary emphasized that tackling climate change is also about taking responsibility for intergenerational justice. This focus became more apparent for the LWF through the advocacy of its all-youth delegation to the United Nations Climate conferences, including the December 2015 COP 21 in Paris, France, he added.

“We won’t be able to tell our children and youth in the future how much we love and care for them if we are not able to show and share with them at the same time how much we care about creation,” Junge said amid applause. He noted the LWF Communion Office was already working on the Council’s request that the LWF become a carbon-neutral communion by 2050.

## Gratitude for ELCA's support to LWF's work

The ELCA's highest-legislative body also voted in favor of a strategy to advocate for and accompany migrant minors and their families and address the root causes of migration from Central America's Northern Triangle and Mexico region. Junge expressed appreciation for this consideration and thanked the ELCA for its support towards LWF's humanitarian work with more than 2.3 million refugees in the world.

The Assembly accepted the "Declaration on the Way" ecumenical document that marks a path toward greater unity between Catholics and Lutherans. At the heart of the document are 32 "Statements of Agreement" stating where Lutherans and Catholics do not have church-dividing differences, as well as remaining differences. The LWF general secretary said the document can be a helpful step on the way to a global agreement between Lutherans and Catholics on church, ministry and the Eucharist.

In other actions, the church body endorsed proposals calling for support toward the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and other Christians in sustaining their presence in the Holy Land.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly met under the theme "Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God's Grace in Action."

*(With contributions from ELCA news releases.)*

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/lwf-encouraged-member-church-action-review-investments-fossil-fuel-companies>

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## August 23, 2016

Native Activist Winona LaDuke: Pipeline Company Enbridge Has No Right to Destroy Our Future

By Amy Goodman  
Democracy Now!

In North Dakota, more than a thousand indigenous activists from different tribes have converged at the Sacred Stone Spirit Camp, where protesters are blocking construction of the proposed \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline. Protesters say the pipeline would threaten to contaminate the Missouri River, which provides water not only for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, but for millions of people downstream. For more, we are joined by Winona LaDuke, Native American activist and executive director of the group Honor the Earth. She lives and works on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota.

## TRANSCRIPT

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

**AMY GOODMAN:** This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, as we continue to look at the growing indigenous protest against the proposed \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline, which they say would threaten to contaminate the Missouri River. We're joined now by Winona LaDuke, Native American activist, executive director of the group Honor the Earth. She lives and works on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota. She was also the Green Party vice-presidential nominee in 1996 and 2000.

Winona, welcome back to *Democracy Now!* Can you talk about why, from the White Earth Reservation, where you live, you've gotten involved with this battle against the Dakota Access pipeline?

**WINONA LADUKE:** Well, good morning, first, Amy and Dave. Yeah, our reservation in northern Minnesota is the proposed site, our territory, for the Sandpiper. For the past four years, I've been fighting the Enbridge company. Enbridge company is proposing three new lines through our territory. One of them is the Sandpiper, and that would cross, affecting—basically, by the time they're done, five of our reservations would be affected by these pipelines, which would go by the Mississippi River and through the heart of our wild rice beds.

Enbridge has been pushing for a brand-new corridor, because they have this old corridor. They say it's got, you know, six pipelines in them, all about 50 years old, kind of falling-apart pipelines, and so they want to, instead of cleaning up their old mess, they want to make a whole new mess. So, for four years, we've been fighting them and telling them they cannot do that. And the courts, you know, had ruled in our favor, and now a full EIS is required. And the tribes are demanding that the process include them and the tribes should have some say in it.

So, I was really surprised, because Enbridge told us all that the only thing that they could do, it was so important to them, the only way they could get their oil to market was to run it through northern Minnesota. And then, one day I wake up, and they forgot all about us, and they move out there to North Dakota. Seemed very disingenuous to me.

**AMY GOODMAN:** And so, you went—

**WINONA LADUKE:** I came out—came out to North Dakota, yeah.

**AMY GOODMAN:** And talk about what you found there.

**WINONA LADUKE:** Well, what I found out in North Dakota is that, you know, the state of North Dakota has been bending over backwards for the oil companies, although the fact is, is that there are now more lawsuits than active drilling rigs out there, you know, because there was such a big push to develop all this oil in the Bakken, basically bust up the bedrock of Mother Earth, put all those chemicals in it, look the other way and pretend like things are going swimmingly out in North Dakota. So, North Dakota has got this landlocked oil. They're taking a beating on it right now. There is an 85 percent drop in active drilling rigs in the Bakken. Fact is, is that they don't even have it going on out there, but they are bound and determined to get whatever oil out of there they can, and so they decided to throw this pipeline through them. You know, North Dakota's regulators are, I would suggest, really in—you know, I would say, in bed with the oil

industry, and they have looked the other way. And so, they have pushed these pipelines through, you know, really, really fast, without any tribal consultation and without a full environmental impact statement.

And that's what needs to happen. You need a full environmental impact statement on this. And, you know, I say—what we say is that you should have a well-to-wheels impact. In other words, it's not just hauling the oil. It's not just endangering all those, you know, watersheds. It's not just the fact that, you know, former editor of *Scientific American* Trudy Bell says 57 percent chance of a catastrophic leak. It's not even just that. It's what about all that carbon? We're sitting here, you know, in this world, where there's been no rain in Syria for five years. There's catastrophic storms everywhere. And this pipeline is going to bring about 250,000-per-day tons of carbon into the atmosphere. That's what this Dakota Access pipeline is. And that's wrong. You know, a private corporation doesn't get to destroy things—a Canadian corporation, at that. Enbridge isn't even a U.S. corporation; you know, Enbridge is a Canadian corporation. And they have no right to destroy our water, no right to compromise our future.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Can you talk a little more about Enbridge? You recently wrote that Enbridge looks a lot like Enron. Explain.

**WINONA LADUKE:** Yeah, I mean, Enbridge is not doing so well. You know, I've been writing letters. I kind of feel like that *Roger & Me* thing. I write letters to Al Monaco, the president of Enbridge. I say, "Hey, it's Winona down here on White Earth, wondering about a few things." They had, you know, a few catastrophic blow-ups last year. And then, this year, first of all, June 30th, they lost this big pipeline. You know, Enbridge is in the pipeline business. The Northern Gateway pipeline, \$7.9 billion proposal, they thought they had it with the Harper administration. You know, that was looking pretty good up in Canada, Stephen Harper. Trudeau gets in. Every tribe along the way, every First Nation along the way and the province of British Columbia is opposing this pipeline, which would take it to Port Kitimat, you know, really pristine area with all these fjords. Anyway, what happens is the Canadian Federal Appeals Court rules that all of the permits are void, that, in fact, Enbridge and the government have to go all the way back and talk to the First Nations, tribal consultation. That had to really hurt Enbridge quite a bit, \$7.9 billion pipeline. You know, we got them on the ropes there in Minnesota. They're now in the EIS process, although they would have liked to kind of like skirt around that. But the citizens of Minnesota and the tribes have forced that process.

And then you add this little problem that's called the faulty pipes scandal. What happened is, is that in July, it was announced in a *National Observer* National Energy Board leak that Enbridge and this other company called Kinder Morgan had purchased these pipes from a—called Cana Oil, Canada Oil, and it's a Thailand-based company, discount pipes. They purchased all these pipes and valves that are faulty. And the National Energy Board of Canada, Canadian government says, "Emergency situation. Where are those pipes, Enbridge?" Enbridge's lawyers have said they need time to disclose where exactly all those pipes are. Now, I'm sitting here, and in northern Minnesota we've got six lines crossing through our really good ecosystem. I'm wondering if some of those pipes are there. Or maybe they're over in a pile by Lake George, next to my reservation. We would like a full disclosure as to where the faulty pipes are that Enbridge has. You know, look at that, and then they got a 40 percent—their shares are down now, a 40

percent drop in their shares, you know, from two years ago. So I feel like Enbridge is not looking so good, not looking so good to their shareholders. And they've got a lot of liability they are putting on us, on Americans, on Native people, and trying to force it down the throat of the Standing Rock people. And I feel like that that company is not a reliable corporation.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Last month, Winona, the Laborers' International Union of North America endorsed the Dakota Access pipeline. Terry O'Sullivan, general president of LIUNA, said in a statement, quote, "The men and women of LIUNA applaud the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for its fair and thorough review of the Dakota Access Pipeline. ... For the highly skilled and trained men and women of LIUNA, projects like the Dakota Access are more than just pipelines. They are crucial lifelines to family-supporting jobs," they said. Laborers Local 563 business agent Cory Bryson said, quote, "We've been inundated with calls from all over the country from people wanting to work on this pipeline project. Mainline pipeline projects like Dakota Access provide excellent working opportunities for our members and tremendous wages." Your response, Winona LaDuke?

**WINONA LADUKE:** My response is that the United States has a D in infrastructure. That's why bridges collapse. That's why Flint, Michigan, has a problem. That's why everything is eroding in this country. And what we need is those skilled laborers to be put to work, pipelines for people. I'm saying take those pipes that are sitting there in northern Minnesota, and send them to Flint, Michigan. They need billions of dollars' worth of pipe infrastructure out there. We don't need any pipes in northern Minnesota. I say that most of our Indian reservations don't have adequate infrastructure. We'd like a little help with our water and sewer systems there. I am all for organized labor, but what I want is I want pipelines, I want infrastructure, for people, not for fossil fuels, not for oil companies. So I am all for that. There are plenty of people that could be put to work. And it's five times as many jobs doing infrastructure for communities, doing for people, than one shot throw a pipe down and hope it works out for you. So I'm asking American labor to stand with us and to say we want pipelines, we want infrastructure, that goes for people, that goes for communities, and not for oil companies that are going to destroy our environment and cause more climate change destruction to our planet.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Winona LaDuke, we want to thank you for being with us, Native American activist, executive director of the group Honor the Earth. She lives and works on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota.

This is *Democracy Now!*, [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org), *The War and Peace Report*. When we come back, we go to Tulsa and to North Carolina. stay with us.

[http://www.democracynow.org/2016/8/23/native\\_activist\\_winona\\_laduke\\_pipeline\\_company](http://www.democracynow.org/2016/8/23/native_activist_winona_laduke_pipeline_company)

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**August 24, 2016**

Dakota Access Pipeline Protests Recall America's Historical Shame

By Sonali Kolhatkar  
TruthDig

Until a few years ago, the word “occupation” was synonymous with power, imperialism and foreign invasion. Today, in the post-Occupy Wall Street era, more and more activists are using their physical presence to make demands. From Manhattan’s Zuccotti Park to Tahrir Square in Cairo, occupation has become a powerful method of organizing.

One of the most dramatic such occupations is occurring in the form of a growing encampment at the Cannonball River in North Dakota, where indigenous tribes are leading a coalition of environmental activists in protest over the building of a new crude oil pipeline.

The Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) has stolen more than a name from American Indians (“dakota” means “friendly” or “allied”). If built, it would pass under the Missouri River twice. The pipeline, which [could leak](#), as many pipelines do, threatens to contaminate the drinking water, crops and burial grounds of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. Federal regulatory agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, quietly approved DAPL, which will [transport Bakkan crude oil](#) from North Dakota through South Dakota, Iowa and Illinois.

Last November, President Obama [rejected the Keystone XL pipeline](#), which would have transported tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to the U.S. Gulf Coast. The rejection was the result of a years-long, hard-fought battle by thousands of activists, many of whom made personal sacrifices, traveled long distances and were even arrested for their acts of civil disobedience.

DAPL, which is only [seven miles shorter than Keystone](#) would have been, has not received the same scrutiny. Now, the only thing standing in the way of the pipeline is a growing army of nonviolent protesters blocking construction. An occupation that began in April has grown to about 2,000 and is still growing. Members of the Standing Rock Sioux have set strict rules at the space they are calling Sacred Stone Camp: No weapons, alcohol or drugs.

Members of other North American tribes, including Canadian First Nations, are traveling to the site in solidarity. Celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio, Shailene Woodley and Ezra Miller have lent their support. The [protesters are standing firm](#), and more than 20 people have been arrested.

Jason Coppola, a filmmaker and journalist who has been covering the protests, explained in [an interview](#) with me that one of the most important aspects of this story is one that is age-old: The U.S. government is violating its treaty obligations to Native American tribes. According to Coppola, “The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 guaranteed complete and total access, undisturbed access, [of the land] to the [Great Sioux Nation](#) of the Oceti Sakowin [Seven Council Fires].” But that treaty has not been respected. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration [explains how](#)—as a result of an expedition led in 1874 by Gen. George Armstrong Custer in search of gold on the Black Hills reservation in North Dakota—”[t]o this day, ownership of the Black Hills remains the subject of a legal dispute between the U.S. government and the Sioux.”



Coppola told me that it is “important to see this fight in the broader context,” because “the Lakota nation and its people have been fighting situations like this for a very long time.” The DAPL dispute is not just about a pipeline running under a river. It is, broadly speaking, about the rights of the original inhabitants of the United States.

At a time when white-supremacist notions are re-emerging and a major-party presidential candidate is encouraging America to hate again, this battle of government and corporate power against Native American rights is an important reminder of the real power dynamics in the U.S. and of who has been denied rights since the founding of the country.

Earlier this year, a group of armed white men led by Ammon Bundy [occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Oregon for more than 40 days in protest of federal land ownership. Those occupiers, who garnered far greater mainstream media attention than the DAPL protesters, ignored the fact that the original stewards of the land they were claiming were members of the Burns Paiute tribe. In fact, the tribe [fought for decades](#) in court to gain rights to the land, only to be given a paltry few hundred dollars per person as compensation.

By contrast, the very people that the U.S. has historically sold out and continues to betray lead the occupation in North Dakota. Just as it served the needs of white settlers in decades past, the government is putting corporate power and fossil fuel interests over Native American rights in the case of the DAPL project.

Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the pipeline, has launched a website with the innocent-sounding name of [daplpipelinefacts.com](#). On it, the company touts seemingly optimistic economic gains, including the creation of “8,000 to 12,000 construction jobs” (contrasted with a mere “40 permanent operating jobs”). It echoes the standard claim of “energy independence” by liberal politicians, saying that the pipeline will help the U.S. be “truly independent of energy from unstable regions of the world,” because “every barrel of crude oil produced in the United States directly displaces a barrel of imported foreign oil.”

Under the “frequently asked questions” section, the website asks: “What is Dakota Access Pipeline’s commitment to protecting sensitive areas and the environment, such as wetlands and culturally important sites?” The lengthy answer addresses only concerns such as restoring seed banks and vegetative cover, but says nothing about the “culturally important sites” that it raises in its own question. The rest of the page focuses mostly on the concerns of private landowners. There is no mention whatsoever of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. It is as if the tribe does not exist.

Obama claimed to set his administration apart from previous ones by partnering with Native American communities. He has made it a point to [visit reservations](#), a rare act by presidential standards. In 2014, during a visit to North Dakota, he said he was “determined to partner with tribes ... on just about every issue that touches your lives.” Indeed, his rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline could be viewed in light of that partnership (Oglala Sioux leader Bryan Brewer called Keystone “a death warrant for our people” during Obama’s visit). In the last few months of Obama’s administration, it remains to be seen whether it will intervene to stop the DAPL despite the approval of federal permits.

Regardless, indigenous activists are determined to occupy their own land for as long as it takes to stop construction of the pipeline. If they succeed, it will be one small measure of justice in a line of injustices going back to the founding of this nation.

[http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/why\\_the\\_dakota\\_access\\_pipeline\\_dispute\\_rings\\_a\\_bell\\_20160824](http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/why_the_dakota_access_pipeline_dispute_rings_a_bell_20160824)

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**August 25, 2016**

In Effort to Kill Pipeline, Groups Call Directly on Obama to Oppose Permits

U.S. Judge James Boasberg said he would make a decision by September 9 on whether to halt work on the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline

By Nadia Prupis  
Common Dreams

As Indigenous activists maintained resistance to a proposed oil pipeline in North Dakota this week, allied groups on Thursday sent an open letter to President Barack Obama asking him to urge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to pull its permits for the project.

"After years of pipeline disasters—from the massive tar sands oil spill in Kalamazoo, Michigan in 2010, to the recent oil pipeline spills in the San Joaquin Valley and Ventura, CA—our organizations and our millions of members and supporters are concerned about the threat these projects pose to our safety, our health, and the environment," reads the [letter](#) (pdf), signed by groups such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Sierra Club, and 350.org.

The letter was published as a federal judge delayed a decision on allowing the construction to continue.

U.S. Judge James Boasberg said after [a hearing](#) in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday that he would make a decision by September 9 on whether to halt work on the pipeline, amid a lawsuit filed against the corps by Standing Rock Sioux tribal leaders. Pipeline developers last week agreed to [pause](#) construction until the decision.

"Whatever the final outcome in court, I believe we have already established an important principle—that is, tribes will be heard on important matters that affect our vital interests," Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Dave Archambault II said Wednesday, [according to](#) the *Bismarck Tribune*.

If the \$3.7 billion pipeline is built, it will transport 500,000 barrels of oil a day past the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in North Dakota and through several rivers—including the Mississippi and Missouri rivers—which supply water to millions of people. It would traverse North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa, before eventually stopping in Illinois.

Camps have [sprung up](#) around the contested area, as the action against the pipeline stretches into its [third week](#), and Amnesty International [announced](#) Wednesday that it had sent a delegation of human rights observers to the protest site. Opponents say the project would destroy sacred and culturally important lands and threaten their access to clean water.

Angela Bevans, an assistant attorney with Sioux background, [told](#) the *Guardian* on Thursday that "[a]ny delay is a win for us, it will give Dakota Access pause and it puts word out that Standing Rock still needs assistance on this."

"We've suffered incarceration, massacre and internment. This is just another chapter in the government allowing a private company to take something that doesn't belong to them just because they can," Bevans said. "It's not a matter of whether there will be a spill, it's when it will happen. Everyone knows what is at stake and we won't be sacrificed. We are protecting the lifeblood of our people, these rivers are the arteries of Mother Earth."

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/08/25/effort-kill-pipeline-groups-call-directly-obama-oppose-permits>

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## **August 26, 2016**

Rewrite: The Protests At Standing Rock (Video)

With Lawrence O'Donnell  
MSNBC

In the Rewrite, Lawrence explains why a protest by Native Americans in North Dakota reminds us of the history American always tries to forget.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwsCuG1kSRk>

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## **August 29, 2016**

Card Turkson gives keynote address at World Water Week 2016

Vatican Radio

Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, gave a keynote address for World Water Week on Monday, in which he examined the links between faith and development in the search to make drinkable water accessible to all people.

His words came at the conference taking place in Stockholm, Sweden on 28 August - 2 September.

In his address, Cardinal Turkson noted several contributions religious faith can make to societal development.

*“Motivation to virtue* is the valuable contribution that religious faith and spiritual practices can and must bring to development, through their spiritual leaders and the multitudes of believers and adherents.”

He also listed several contributions of faith-based organizations to making universal and sustainable access to drinkable water a reality.

- Educate youth to embrace solidarity, altruism, and responsibility. The latter of these virtues will help them to be honest administrators and politicians.

- In teaching Sacred Scriptures and spiritual traditions, show that water is a precious and even a divine element. It is used extensively in liturgy. This should inspire us to use water with respect and gratitude, reclaim polluted water sources, and understand that water is not a mere commodity.

-Organize interreligious campaigns for cleaning rivers or lakes, in order to foster mutual respect, peace and friendship among different groups.

-Reaffirm human dignity and the common good of the whole human family in order to promote a wise hierarchy of priorities for the use of water, especially where there are multiple and potentially competing demands for water.

***Below is Cardinal Turkson's full speech:***

*World Water Week - Stockholm, Sweden*

*Session “Water and Faiths: Faith based Organizations contributing to the Water SDGs”*

*29 August 2016*

*Keynote Address - Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson*

*“Faith and Development”*

Distinguished representatives of various Religions, Organizers, dear Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to greet you in the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Having been asked to speak on “Faith and Development”, I notice that many religions are represented here. This suggests that indeed there are many links between faith and development. Fruitful inter-religious collaborations and synergies have already started in several sectors, such as healthcare, food security, investment, education, stewardship of natural resources, and assistance to migrants.

From a Catholic perspective, our planet, its resources and ecosystems are a marvellous gift. So too, human life is a gift – we are not self-created, we receive our bodies and our first relationships through the same grand course of divinely-given nature. Hence, we readily understand that nature is intended to be shared between all the humans, one generation after the other, and that the whole human family is expected to take care of our common home. These fundamentals are easily found in other religions and spiritual traditions as well, regardless of their specific unique features.

Why is this shared fundamental understanding so important for development?

First of all, science can only explain concrete reality, its substances and causal relationships. Science can quantify the pollution in deep oceans or around a mining site, foreseeing its negative consequences and proposing remedies. But science cannot provide the motivation for virtuous action. The same holds beyond the realm of the natural sciences: sociologists, economists and lawyers can analyse and explain the negative effects of unemployment, speculation and corruption; they can warn us about rising inequalities, contradictory policies or geopolitical unrest. But in the end they cannot supply the motivation for virtuous action.

Pope Francis, in the Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, asks: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? [...] What is the goal of our work and all our efforts?” (§160). Observing numerous alarming environmental and social indicators leads us to the daunting question: why should I care? Science and technology will not help here. Any technical solution is powerless “if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well” (§200). Pope Francis shares his conviction “that change is impossible without motivation and a process of education” – and for those purposes he proposes “some inspired guidelines for human development to be found in the treasure of Christian spiritual experience” (§15), since “faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters” (§64).

Simply put, motivation to virtue is the valuable contribution that religious faith and spiritual practices can and must bring to development, through their spiritual leaders and the multitudes of believers and adherents. They “must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions” (200). They must contribute, for example, to the adoption and further extension of ambitious and ethically-rooted frameworks for development action such as those pertaining to the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals.

A second perspective grounded in faith touches on human dignity. We are much more than items or data to be measured and represented by GDP. We are not simply factors of production and consumption. When human beings are just human resources, they cease to be the measure of success of policies. Instead, humans become disposable. Throw these people away in favour of better producers. Displace those people in favour of more profitable consumption of water.

Our vision of being human must be much more complex. Pope Francis teaches that we must integrate spirituality, social relationality, and our connections with nature. This lies behind his

conviction that “what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn” (§160).

Since we are gathered during the World Water Week, I would like to conclude by giving a few examples of the contributions that Faith-based-organizations can provide concerning water.

- Educate youth to embrace solidarity, altruism and responsibility. The latter of these virtues will help them to be honest administrators and politicians.
- In teaching Sacred Scriptures and spiritual traditions, show that water is a precious and even a divine element. It is used extensively in liturgy. This should inspire us to use water with respect and gratitude, reclaim polluted water sources and understand that water is not a mere commodity.
- Organize interreligious campaigns for cleaning rivers or lakes, in order to foster mutual respect, peace and friendship among different groups.
- Reaffirm human dignity and the common good of the whole human family in order to promote a wise hierarchy of priorities for the use of water, especially where there are multiple and potentially competing demands for water.

All this will help in making universal and sustainable access to drinkable water a reality. This most vital challenge has been a focus for the Catholic Church for many years. It is a continuing shame that so many of our brothers and sisters are systematically thirsty or compelled to drink unsafe water; that their needs are secondary to industries which take too much and that pollute what remains; that governments pursue other priorities and ignore their parched cries. We already know how Jesus judges these matters. In the Gospel of Matthew (25:35), Jesus teaches what we are supposed to do: “I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink”. I pray that this conference will help the world to be more alert to the thirst of Jesus and give him sufficient, clean water to drink! Thank you.

*(Devin Sean Watkins)*

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/08/29/card\\_turkson\\_gives\\_keynote\\_address\\_at\\_world\\_water\\_week\\_2016/1254435](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/08/29/card_turkson_gives_keynote_address_at_world_water_week_2016/1254435)

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**August 30, 2016**

Why is Canada denying its indigenous peoples clean water?

By Amanda Klasing  
The Globe and Mail

“She likes to take a bath, but [the water] irritates her skin,” Susan said of her active two-year-old daughter. When the little girl was 18 months old, Susan started to notice rashes all over her

daughter's legs. "I thought it was something from the grass," she said. Instead, a doctor informed her that the baby's rash was probably from her water. Susan can't bathe her daughter at home now; she takes her to a daycare centre or relative's house.

Susan lives in Grassy Narrows First Nation in Ontario, where I spoke to her and other families in February to learn about living under a "do not consume" water advisory.

The water in the well that supplies her home is contaminated with uranium; water trucked in from a local treatment plant to fill a cistern at her house has dangerous levels of a cancer-causing byproduct that comes from treating dirty source water.

I have visited many countries conducting human rights research for Human Rights Watch. Canada, with its global reputation as a rights-respecting country with bountiful fresh water, was the last place I expected to encounter parents worried that their water could harm their children. While investigating [Human Rights Watch's report on the drinking water crisis in Ontario First Nations](#), I spoke to dozens of parents and grandparents who cannot trust their water – which can weigh heavily on the heart and mind.

Unfortunately, Grassy Narrows and Susan's situation are far from unique. As The Globe and Mail detailed Monday in its excellent reporting on water safety, there are currently 158 similar drinking water advisories in 114 First Nation communities. This statistic doesn't reveal the full extent of water problems facing First Nations communities. Some lack any running drinking water, relying only on trucks and cisterns, and many households rely on well water, which is often contaminated. The basic human right to water is seriously at risk in First Nations communities across Canada.

Exposure to the contaminants found in this water can cause illnesses ranging from gastrointestinal disorders to increased risk of cancer. Knock-on effects – like bathing less when people can't trust their water – includes the proliferation or worsening of skin infections, eczema, psoriasis, and other skin conditions.

Yet, the federal government has not done enough to address this crisis. For decades, the government has invested in building new infrastructure without first creating the environment for communities to guarantee safe water – such as the regulations that exist in the rest of Canada. No safe drinking water rules exist for First Nation reserves. Introducing rules alone can't guarantee safe water, but coupled with sustainable funding and support they can create an enabling environment.

Dozens of communities languish for years on the priority list analyzed by The Globe, thanks to years of unpredictable or insufficient funding for water systems. The federal government funds water budgets at a deficit, meaning that communities often do not have enough money to keep systems in good working order. Meanwhile, the quality and safety of source water has declined, with new contaminants such as personal care products and pharmaceutical waste making water more expensive to treat.

The Trudeau government has taken historic steps to resolve the crisis by increasing its water budget and promising to end long-term boil water advisories in five years. But the government data obtained by The Globe show that ending the crisis requires systemic changes to reduce risks for everyone living on reserve. The government should be collaborating with First Nations to develop a plan for long-term and sustainable solutions with measurable targets to monitor success.

Many countries face water crises, but few have the natural or financial resources of Canada. The First Nation drinking water crisis is a preventable and unnecessary burden borne most by children, the elderly, the sick and caregivers like Susan.

It's time for Canada to fulfill everyone's right to clean, healthy water.

*Amanda Klasing, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch, specializes in the right to clean water.*

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/why-is-canada-denying-its-indigenous-peoples-clean-water/article31599791/>

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**August 30, 2016**

Disputed Dakota pipeline was approved by Army Corps over major objections by three federal agencies

By Phil McKenna  
Inside Climate News

*Sioux tribe's concerns were echoed in official reports by the EPA and two other agencies, but Army Corps of Engineers brushed them aside.*

BISMARCK, N.D.—Senior officials at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and two other federal agencies raised serious environmental and safety objections to the North Dakota section of the controversial Dakota Access oil pipeline, the same objections being voiced in a large protest by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe that has so far succeeded in halting construction.

But those concerns were dismissed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which relied on [an environmental assessment prepared by the pipeline's developer, Dakota Access LLC](#), when it approved the project in July, [according to public documents](#).

The 1,134-mile pipeline would carry approximately 500,000 barrels of crude per day from North Dakota to Illinois along a route that did not originally pass near the Standing Rock reservation, the documents show. After the company rerouted the pipeline to cross the Missouri River just a half-mile upstream of the reservation, the tribe complained that the Army Corps did not consider threats to its water supply and cultural heritage.



The EPA, the Department of the Interior and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation echoed those concerns in public comments on the Army Corps' draft environmental assessment. Citing risks to water supplies, inadequate emergency preparedness, potential impacts to the Standing Rock reservation and insufficient environmental justice analysis, the agencies urged the Army Corps to issue a revised draft of their environmental assessment.

"Crossings of the Missouri River have the potential to affect the primary source of drinking water for much of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Tribal nations," Philip Strobel, National Environmental Policy Act regional compliance director for the EPA, [wrote in a March 11 letter](#) to the Army Corps.

The current route of the pipeline is 10 miles upstream of Fort Yates, the tribal headquarters of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and the county seat. The Standing Rock Sioux rely on the Missouri River for drinking water, irrigation and fish.

The EPA shared its concerns and recommended that the Army Corps undertake a new draft environmental assessment and release it for public comment. In that process, the EPA asked the Army Corps to consider "other available routes or crossing locations that would have reduced potential to water resources, especially drinking water supplies," and to carry out a "more thorough" analysis of environmental justice concerns. The other agencies also asked for further assessments and consultation with the tribes.

The Army Corps instead published its final environmental assessment four months later, which constituted final approval of the project. In it, the Corps acknowledged the agencies' comments, but said "the anticipated environmental, economic, cultural, and social effects" of the project are "not injurious to the public interest."

The Army Corps, which has jurisdiction over domestic pipelines that cross major waterways, declined a request for comment, citing ongoing litigation. Energy Transfer, owner of Dakota Access LLC, did not respond to a request for comment. The company has previously said "we are constructing this pipeline in accordance with applicable laws, and the local, state and federal permits and approvals we have received."

### **Tribe Takes their Complaints Public**

The tribe's growing protest has gathered in a camp near Cannon Ball, N.D., and has drawn support from Native Americans from around the country as well as environmental activists. An estimated 1,200 people are camping there and Sioux leaders say 90 tribes are represented among the protesters.

The protest blocked construction equipment two weeks ago and Energy Transfer halted construction on the section of pipeline closest to the Standing Rock reservation. A [federal judge said last week](#) he will rule by September 9 on whether to grant the Standing Rock Sioux a temporary injunction. That would bar construction on sections of the pipeline where the ground hasn't yet been disturbed until a suit calling for the Army Corps to redo its permitting process can be heard.

The Standing Rock reservation spans 3,600 square miles across North and South Dakota, where 41 percent of its 8,217 residents live below the poverty level, more than triple the national average, [according to a 2012 economic development report](#) prepared for the tribe. Nearly a quarter of its population is unemployed.

In its comments calling for a re-do, the EPA said the environmental justice analysis in the Army Corps' draft environmental assessment used county-by-county or state-by-state data when the preferred level of analysis is "census block groups or census tracts."

"A screening level analysis for EJ [environmental justice] indicates there are several census block groups with substantial minority and/or low income demographics that could be potentially impacted by the project," the EPA wrote. "In addition to analyzing potential EJ impacts, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (February 16, 1994) also requires public outreach to potentially affected EJ communities."

In its final environmental assessment, the Army Corps said its analysis "contains an Environmental Justice analysis that conforms with recognized practice."

The agency also said the pipeline does not cross tribal land. "In fact, tribal land was specifically avoided as a routing mitigation measure," it said. "The Project does not anticipate any impact to water supplies along its route, and to the extent a response action is required, federal regulation will be complied with."

### **Route Became a Moving Target**

The original route for the proposed pipeline crossed the Missouri River further north, 10 miles upstream of Bismarck, the state capital. North Dakota Public Service Commission documents [show the route upstream of Bismarck](#) in a May 29, 2014 map by Energy Transfer.

The company later rejected this route, citing a number of factors, including more road and wetland crossings, a longer pipeline, and higher costs. Also listed as a concern was the close proximity to wellheads providing Bismarck's drinking water supply.

"They moved it down to Standing Rock, which is a very remote area, but people live at Standing Rock too. There is an environmental justice component here," said Jan Hasselman, an attorney with environmental advocacy organization EarthJustice, which filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Standing Rock Tribe against the Army Corps of Engineers.

In its public comments, the Department of the Interior, the government agency responsible for the administration and management of Native American lands, called for the Army Corps to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement, a more comprehensive analysis of the potential impact of the proposed pipeline.

"We believe the Corps did not adequately justify or otherwise support its conclusion that there would be no significant impacts upon the surrounding environment and community," Lawrence

Roberts, acting assistant secretary of Indian affairs at the Department of the Interior, [wrote in a letter to the Army Corps](#) in March.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), a federal agency that promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of the nation's historic resources, also expressed concern over the Army Corps' assessment.

Federal law requires federal agencies to take into account the effect a proposed project will have on historic property. The Army Corps' assessment, however lacked adequate consultation with the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and focused on a limited number of water crossings rather than on the pipeline's entire expanse, according to letters ACHP officials wrote to the Army Corps.

"Based on the inadequacies of the tribal consultation and the limited scope for identification of historic properties that may be affected, the ACHP questions the sufficiency of the Corps' identification effort, its determinations of eligibility, and assessments of effect," Reid Nelson, director of the office of federal agency programs for ACHP, [wrote in a May 19 letter](#) to the Army Corps.

In its final assessment, the Corps stated there is "no new significant information on environmental effects" as a result of comments from the EPA and others. "As such, neither a supplemental or revised EA [Environmental Assessment] for further public review nor additional NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] compliance actions was required."

"We're talking about a broad overarching and fundamental failure which is the decision to look very narrowly at environmental impacts at a few specific locations rather than the pipeline as a whole," Hasselman said of the Army Corps' assessment.

Having their concerns dismissed by the Corps, the tribe turned next to the courts. Their lawsuit calls for a halt to construction and full consideration of the pipeline's impact on tribal lands and water.

To obtain a preliminary or "emergency" injunction, however, attorneys representing the Standing Rock tribe will have to demonstrate imminent harm to historic sites if construction proceeds.

"To the extent that people are concerned about harm from oil spills, that is still a ways off," Hasselman said. "We can't really seek emergency relief on that front. That is something that we will be seeking in the course of the lawsuit."

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/30082016/dakota-access-pipeline-standing-rock-sioux-army-corps-engineers-approval-environment>