

Frederick Douglass: Human Trafficking Activist

by Isaac Chandler, National Council



Recently, Frederick Douglass became news when President Trump lauded the contributions of Douglass, King, and other African-Americans during a press conference on Black History Month. Trump talked of the contributions of Douglass and brought some attention to the new African-American History Museum which opened recently. However, many persons on social media took exception to Trump's comments, because he seemed to think that Douglass was still living and he provided no details of his contributions. The Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives (FDFI) used this blunder as an opportunity not only to educate the president on the contributions of their ancestor and highlight the upcoming bicentennial of Douglass's birth in February 2018, but also to bring attention to the tragedy of human trafficking.

In 1845, Douglass's narrative of his life in slavery was published. Douglass detailed his life in bondage, the verbal and physical abuse from his "overseers" and "owners," the constant fear for his life, his first attempt of escape and subsequent jailing, and his eventual escape from slavery. In his later years, Douglass distinguished himself as an orator, journalist, newspaper editor, bank president, US Marshall, and anti-human trafficking activist.

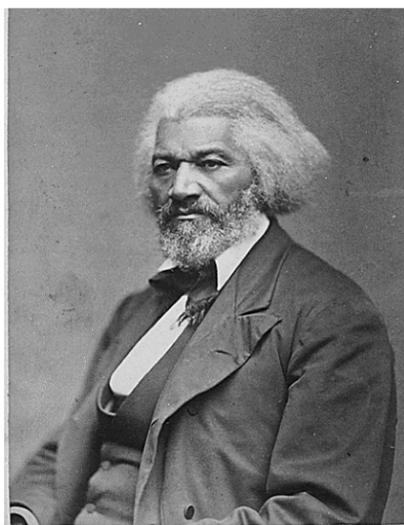
When most people think of human trafficking, they think of countries overseas. Globally, human trafficking is a \$150 billion illicit industry with 20.9 million enslaved human beings (International Labour Organization) and 2.5 million children forced into the global sex trade (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children). However, according to FDFI, human trafficking is also one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. It is

present in all 50 states, and it is estimated that between 100,000 and 300,000 children are vulnerable to this evil. Traffickers use the tools of force, fraud, or coercion to induce their victims. Even though this crime does not discriminate based on race, age, geography, or socioeconomic status, some groups are heavily targeted (i.e. people in poverty, immigrants, children from broken homes, children with low self-esteem).

The FDFI has joined with other organizations to form PROTECT: Prevention Organized to Educate Children about Trafficking. The purpose of PROTECT is to address the issue of human trafficking through a standard curriculum in California schools. The objectives of the curriculum include preventing potential victims by providing teachers and students the ability to recognize the dangers of trafficking and the methods of traffickers.

The US history of slavery, the legacy of Frederick Douglass, and the present threat of human trafficking in the US and around the world amplify the necessity of being educated about slavery and human trafficking. It is easy to be educated when organizations like the Salvation Army provide anti-trafficking materials, and when the American Broadcasting Company series "American Crime"

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Frederick Douglass, 1897

The Peace Current

Pax Christi USA, The National Catholic Peace Movement

Spring 2017



We joined peace & justice groups and advocates outside the White House to pray for peace on Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil for Peace at White House

by Rachel Schmidt, Communications Coordinator

A day after President Donald Trump announced his federal budget that gives an additional \$54 billion to the military and slashes many necessary poverty programs, it was fitting to pray the blessing of Ash Wednesday "Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return" outside the White House at a prayer vigil for peace.

Accepting that one day, we will again be dust is a reminder of our humility and transience on this earth. Hopefully, knowing that there is an end to our earthly lives provides motivation, to **See Ash Wednesday page 6**



Members Mary Liepold and Sr. Maureen McLaughlin held the Pax Christi USA banner.



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Reflect and Act on the Signs of the Times

Dear Companion on the Journey,

Warm greetings and blessings to each of you and your families as we experience the blessings of Easter. We experience rebirth in the memory of Jesus's resurrection and God's words of hope, as God promises, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20).

The theme for this Peace Current issue focuses on Human Rights and Global Restoration, which is one of our four initiatives. Our commitment to nonviolent peacemaking calls us to respond to matters of injustice like human trafficking, ecological damage, and the lack of respect for our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, Pope Francis has called Christians to an ongoing commitment to welcome and integrate migrants and refugees who are seeking places of safety outside their home cities and countries; they are on the move because of war, persecution, or lack of food and clean water.

Pope Francis described the current migration phenomenon as the world's greatest tragedy after the Second World War. May this issue of the Peace Current move us to reflect and then act on these important issues of our time.

Peace of Christ,

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to live out the Gospel values of
peace and nonviolence?**

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Hope

by co-creating in community and through God's grace. So we don't need to reach millions. We need only to reach out, establishing and developing relationships without quantifying our efforts. We set foundations for encounter, yet let the mystery of knowing the Other do its work. We nurture communities to grow and tighten them, but accept that it is the community's power over us by which we are enabled to go about "doing good and healing all those oppressed." We need only provide the basics, relying on grace's provision for the rest. A humbler path towards our imagined vision is the only way we can sustain our work against today's many intensifying dangers to the common good.

Despite the risks, we must evermore return to imagining. From there, we can make a fresh decision for Christ uncompromised and total basis of our lives. From there, against the hate and the fear, the corruption and the inequality, the violence and the profound injustice, we can hope in that which we can just barely see. From there, witnessing to the Resurrection, we can emulate Mary Magdalene and the women of the Gospel, those first and most faithful disciples. Like them, we are not only remaining at the Crucifixions of our world today; we are running forth from death to proclaim life. We are imagining the Kingdom of God into being.

Beauty

peace work? How can we double or triple our Pax Christi membership this year? Numbers matter if we are to effect change and demonstrate our strength. How can we deepen our commitment to being an anti-racist, multi-cultural movement for justice and peace in the Catholic community? Can we ask those most vulnerable what they need from us and then hold ourselves accountable to what we hear?

A Pax Christi banner, regularly carried in vigils, reads "Violence Ends Where Loves Begins," and this seems to fit now more than ever. With love, with God and each other, and with all who are rising up, we have what it takes to build that beloved community. And when hope wears thin, remember to bring flowers.

Douglass

has human trafficking as the focus of this season's episodes. All these efforts to educate the public on human trafficking reflect the words of Frederick Douglass: "Knowledge makes a child unfit to be a slave," which we must embrace in the present time to prevent and eradicate modern-day slavery.



Ash Wednesday

peace activists and politicians alike, to be our best selves while we are here.

The Ash Wednesday prayer vigil for peace was organized by Art Laffin, a Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace and leader at the Washington D.C. Catholic Worker. During the vigil, leaders of many social justice organizations spoke out for peace, shared stories of people affected by injustice, and offered prayers.

When it was time for the distribution of ashes, participants blessed each other with the cross of ashes on the forehead. In addition, crosses of ash were drawn on the ground in front of the White House.



Above: Attendees blessed the ground in front of the White House with crosses made of ash; Below: activists held banners; Bottom: participants blessed one another with ashes.



Hoping for God's Kindom When It Doesn't Feel Easy

by Bob Shine, New Ways Ministry



We are in a moment of decision. In the United States, hate is emboldened, corruption abounds, inequality grows, and the very foundations of democracy are attacked. We have already been resisting empire and seeking peace with justice, but the increasing threats to millions demands of us an even deeper discipleship. We are in a decisive moment to choose Christ anew.

But we cannot recommit to the Gospel and offer resistance that is sustainable unless we can imagine what is to come, glimpsing at the reign of God. Poet Percy Bysshe Shelley describes imagination as the "greatest instrument of the moral good," yet exercising this instrument can be difficult when we are overwhelmed or despairing. Is it possible to imagine a time beyond the present? If we close our eyes and open our beings, what do we glimpse of the horizon from which Christ beckons us?

By imagining, we root ourselves in dangerous memories. Knowing our histories means we know this historical moment is neither unprecedented nor doomed. Imagining ourselves at another moment helps cultivate more deeply our communion with those before us who, faced with despondency and evil, strove for liberation nonetheless. And if we imagine Jesus's world in the first century Levant, we see it was much like our own today, brimming with apocalypticism and empire. But of Jesus's historical moment, Walter Wink writes, "Incubating in the womb of that period was God's rash gamble that humanity might become more humane." Might this be true for



today, too?

By imagining, we propel ourselves into the future. We see a time acceptable to God when people on peripheries become centered: the poor know Good News, the captives live in freedom, the wounded are healed, and the oppressed attain liberation. In this time, swords have become the plowshares used to break open creation's richness so it is accessible to all. Every person is seated at the

"Every person is seated at the divine meal, known and accepted as their truest self."

divine meal, known and accepted as their truest self. We experience absolute unity with one another and with God. Imagining this time outside time, what do we see, and

are our beings in history moved by this vision to work for God's reign?

Yet, flourishing imaginations are hazardous instruments. They are disruptive, because we cannot dictate what we see or how we are moved. We must therefore be prudent and wise in translating visions into realities. We are not the Savior. We do not create the Kindom of God except

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The Ecological Debt of One Dollar Mangoes

by Sr. Rose Marie Tresp, RSM, National Council Secretary



I went to one of those “Everything’s a Dollar Stores” and saw 10 ounces of frozen mango chunks for one dollar each. I bought four and opened one at home to eat. I started to think about how many mangoes this was, how hard it is to cut up mangoes, where the mangoes were grown, and what it took to get this package of frozen mango chunks to me. How is it possible for these mango chunks to only cost one dollar with all of the people’s labor that went into producing them? People grew, picked, cut, processed, froze, shipped, and sold these mangoes, I thought. I realized then, that the only way this 10-ounce package cost me a measly dollar was that many of the workers earned poverty wages. In their situation of lack, these workers were subsidizing my cheap food.

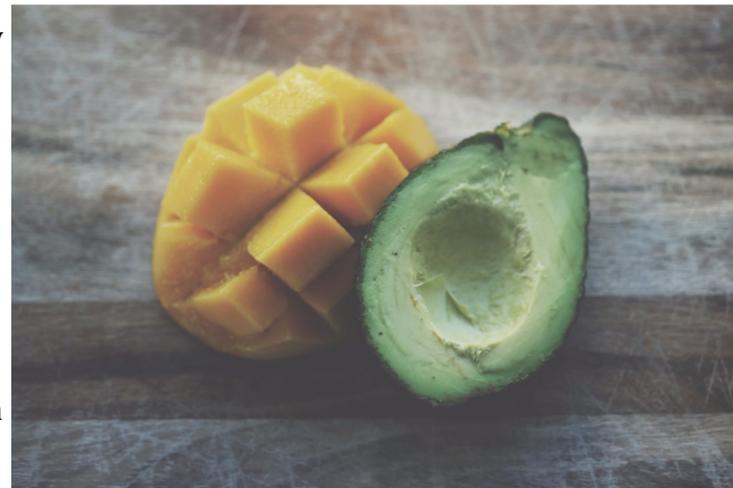
Since much of our food and natural raw resources come from the Global South, where most of these workers live in poverty, the Global South is subsidizing the lifestyles of the Global North. Often we hear that wealthy people’s taxes are subsidizing people who are in situations of poverty. There is much debate and argument over the person in poverty’s worthiness to said subsidies. But there is not often a thought to workers who earn less than living wages and how this injustice is subsidizing the lifestyles of the middle class and wealthy in the United States.

Pope Francis refers to this unjust situation as a true “ecological debt.” Today, the Global North, which is home to 20% of the population, consumes 80% of the world’s resources. An ecological debt is owed to the Global South for all the natural resources and cheap labor that allow the Global North to have inexpensive consumer goods and food.

There is also a debt owed to the environment. The overuse of consumer goods has caused the earth, in the words of Pope Francis, to begin “to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.”

The places where this “filth” is deposited is poor

neighborhoods and countries with fewer enforceable environmental regulations. In the US, landfills are found in poorer neighborhoods. In other countries, mining companies, for example, after taking the available raw resources for things like smartphones, leave behind human and environmental damages such as deforestation, polluted waters, and land that no longer sustains agriculture. The multinational companies, producing the consumer goods and raising capital in the Global North, are able to operate with little restraint on their activities in much of the Global South.



Villages, once self-sustaining in raising their own food, can no longer do so; the people migrate to the larger, over-crowded cities or to other countries in search of life for themselves and their children. The warming of the earth means that a rise in temperature, with drought, has made farming less productive or even impossible.

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, calls us to an ecological conversion to be protectors of the earth. He states that this is “not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” (*Laudato Si'*, 217) This conversion must result in efforts to move our political and economic systems to policies and practices which protect the earth, our common home. This effort is particularly important as the current administration plans to roll back current US regulations which protect the earth.

The World Will Be Saved by Beauty...and Solidarity

by Jean Stokan, National Council



When the Trump administration issued a ban on entry to the US of persons from seven Muslim countries in late January, demonstrations took place at airports all over the country in solidarity with families being separated.

(Noteworthy: of the seven countries, the US was bombing or has a military presence in six: Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and is imposing harsh sanctions on the last: Iran.)

A National Day of Solidarity with American Muslims was called for by a coalition of immigrant and refugee groups for February 3rd. They circulated dozens of ways to support local Muslim communities, and one item in particular caught the eye of some Mercy Sisters in Rochester: take a bouquet of flowers to your local mosque. When the sisters arrived at the mosque carrying their bouquet, the door opened and the staff beamed with joy and gratitude. The sisters then saw that the entire reception area was full of flowers. Clearly, that gesture of beauty had captured many hearts.

Such acts of solidarity, and much more, are needed to face the formidable challenges of this moment in our country’s history, for the very social fabric of our country has been poisoned by those fanning hate, racism, sexism, and xenophobia.

Pax Christi members are immersed in a host of local initiatives from prayer vigils and building interfaith relationships, to partnering with Black Lives Matter and immigrant-led groups to set up protection mechanisms for those most threatened. Sanctuary networks are being organized to shield those about to be deported, and we are preparing for legislative battles in Congress to stop the proposed cuts in social

services and increased funds for private prisons and the “greatest military build-up” in decades.

It is our time to bring all we know of nonviolence to this moment, and to offer it to the resistance movements rising up all over the country.

We will need to weave our social movements tighter, build up our numbers, create public witness actions that stir the moral imagination, and say lots of prayer.

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary (Apr. 4) of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s talk at Riverside Church in New York on “Beyond Vietnam,” we can draw on King’s analysis around the giant “triplets of racism, militarism, and materialism,” as well as draw strength from his image of “the beloved community.”

Whether for individual reflection or for Pax Christi groups who gather, we offer some questions to consider around how we can grow our Pax Christi movement larger and stronger: Can we move from being activists to being organizers? Can we reach out to new people and share the richness of Catholic Social Teaching and the spirituality of nonviolence? Can we step out of our comfort zones and accept leadership roles in our local justice and

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