



GRACE NOTES

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APRIL 2023



Burying Deadening Beliefs - page 1-4
Pastor's Message Time of Great Fear and Crisis - page 5
A Prayer for Immigrants - page 6
CT AG Tong Sues 4 Ghost Gun Dealers - page 6-7
Charges Against Trump - page 7
ELCA Anti-Transgender Legislation Statement - page 8
Housing Group Seeking Aid of Suburban Churches -
page 8-11
Guns Don't Kill People, American's Kill People -
page 11-15
Rebalancing the Lower Courts - page 15-16
Employment for Formerly Incarcerated Americans -
page 16-19
Israel In Turmoil - page 20
Biden's Proposed Asylum Ban - page 21-22
Spring Clean-up - page 22
April Birthdays and Important Dates - page 23

BURYING DEADENING BELIEFS

Poem by Kirk Byron Jones

Holding a belief
does not make it holy.
The sacredness
of a belief is in
its power to bless.

Any belief that
thwarts your openness
to divine transformation
is deadening, and
deserves to be buried.



Kirk Byron Jones a professor at Andover Newton, the place where I graduated with an MDiv, and a rabbi from Hebrew College, did a course together. A paper written from my heart asked, "Who is the Martin Luther King, Jr. of our time?" The course was about the relationship between Abraham J. Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. Heschel had a remarkable grasp of God the Father, and MLK, Jr. spoke so eloquently to the call of Jesus his son. Hand and hand they walked across bridges, at risk of their lives, addressing the fallacies and brokenness of America.

Rabbinical students had their papers reviewed by the Rabbi; Christian students' papers were examined by Dr. Jones. He opened me up to jazz and its relationship to preaching, and his deep connections to poetry and photography. He was and is a wise and loving man. He wrote

on the top of my paper, “**You are!**” It was Kirk Byron Jones who spoke at my installation at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in 2008. What a blessing!

While in the third year of study in Aerospace Engineering with a Math minor, and sitting on a windowsill in our dorm room, life suddenly became clear. Brooklyn Polytechnic was to become a Technological University (it is now a part of NYU). I would be the first graduate in Humanistic Studies. Engineering was teaching me how to take the world apart, it was my hope to serve it. Martin Luther King, Jr was doing just that. I would follow his lead, go to Seminary and work for Civil Rights. Not to be a pastor, but to work for Civil Rights through the church.

Having earlier attended military school in **segregated** Charleston, South Carolina, I fully carried the memories of how horrific racism, segregation and violence could be. Maybe it was the times that my Japanese roommate and I would go to the Apollo Theater, hearing Moms Mabley, James Brown with cape and all, and feeling welcomed as the only white person in the theater, and Danny Yoshida, the only Asian within our sights. I fully grasped the joys of being in Harlem. Danny did a mean imitation of the Godfather of Soul.

At Poly during the riots between Italians and Blacks in Brooklyn; we witnessed firsthand what civil war was like. Military equipment passing the church where seniors, mostly Jewish, huddled in fear, while the pastor worked tirelessly to administer to those wounded or killed. It was me offering refuge to the frightened elderly at the Lutheran Church I served that summer.

Some years later, with no money, a wife and two children, it was off to Mt. Airy Seminary. Within three weeks’ time, our lives were forever changed. Our youngest son, David, was diagnosed as 50% brain damaged. Looking for the best paying job possible took priority over my studies of koine Greek. Responsibility for my family expanded as my wife was diagnosed as an alcoholic. Seven years later my wife’s alcoholism had gotten far worse. The boys were at risk... the only option for us was for me to divorce and have custody of the boys. With the help of friends, that was accomplished.

I can almost see detractor’s roll their eyes. My divorce was a personal act of shame. I left the church believing that marriage was a once in a lifetime commitment. Yes, I am imperfect, and fully understand that. In the interim between then and now, my friend, Fred, introduced me to Judy on a blind date. I found Fred at Connecticut General in Bloomfield. He was working in the Group Pension operation. I had been hired as an actuarial student, by CG, maximizing my pay, building off my studies in engineering and math.

But Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968. How could I be an actuarial student developing a catastrophe reinsurance rate book? I knew that this is not what I was to do in my life. Resignation was the only option. This multi-billion dollar corporation was a short distance from a city, called Hartford, and what was this company doing about poverty, joblessness, and the other urban ills? The company asked if I would help them figure that out.

A group of people, including me, from CG adopted the Barbour Street and Clark Street schools and established a program to hire the so-called “hard-core unemployed”. We were involved in the development of the “Everywhere School.” I became close to Catherine Jenkins and Carrie Perry of the Northeast Progress Center of the CRT. We withdrew our investments in South Africa. And we built an affirmative action program for the company. Hiring people of color and

women in positions other than low-paying jobs.

The problem? Once a more diverse mix of employees were hired, issues began to surface. White supervisors had issues with the new hires, and people of color and women were struggling with the white male supervisors. While doing a masters in psychology at the University of Hartford, my professor Mike Klaber, a psychologist, was experimenting with human interaction laboratories or encounter groups. I asked him, why don't you include such things in your classes? He invited me to attend one, and I was hooked. Over the years I went from a student of encounter groups to a leader of them. The solution to the problems developing at CG was group process. As adjunct faculty, I taught a class in Group Process at the U of H. I became actively involved in the Human Potential Movement.

Management of CG asked me to work on the problem that was developing between newly hired people and the old guard. I proposed a group process initiative to be tested in the basement of the main building with a slice of people from the entire company: cleaning staff, attorneys, senior management and middle management. Including people of all different ages, sex, tenure, and levels in the company.

Fred was in the third workshop. He is now nationally known and has worked all over the world in addressing issues of racism, sexism, in huge corporations, smaller companies, cities, police forces, you name it. In fact, after I was to leave Connecticut General after 24 years (as a senior vice president – having taken a “real” job), I evolved to the point where I no longer wanted to work for someone. Fred was the first person to hire me as a consultant, and I did Mobil Oil, Lexus, and Winchester Fire Arms among others with his consulting firm. I was and am an agent of change everywhere I've been. But, at the top of my “consulting game”, having worked for billionaires and very powerful corporate players, I realized that “I hadn't completed my call.” I went to my dear wife, partner and friend and said, I want to drop my consulting work and go to seminary. While my work was all about change, and my clients often spoke of their personal struggles, human and spiritual, I was ready. Judy's response? “I knew it.”

At age 60, I returned to the then-called, “Philadelphia Theological Seminary” to do my “Lutheran year.” Traveling by train from MA to PA every week for a year, returning home Fridays and back on the train Sunday nights. I loved it. Made recommendations to the President of the Seminary on what an opportunity they had to bring together the night students at the seminary who were mostly black and the day students who were mostly white. It was a great opportunity to address civil rights issues as part of religious preparation. I was disappointed that the Seminary did not take my advice although they did ask for feedback on their strategic plan.

Grace continues to “be the place” that I believe I belong. I've thought and felt that this is where God wants me to be. My consulting, psychologist friends and colleagues all reacted with shock that I would do what I did. Frankly, few encouraged me. They told me that working with churches was virtually impossible because of all of the different points of view, often supported by who thinks they are the most right about God's will. Often conflicts occur in churches and among churches causing schisms and serious human relations dilemmas. There are such issues within our dear Grace. I am seen as a monster by some, and a good pastor by others.

Burying Deadening Beliefs

(continued from page 3)

Some believe that they know better about what is to be done, some remain neutral, and others question my every move, and most recently question my health and mind. I will serve this church as long as it will have me and want me to do so. I am not perfect, but I love this church, the people in it, including those who hope I would get out of their way.

With Judy's health getting stronger, yet awaiting the testing now postponed until April 18th, we are hoping that she will get a clean bill of health and our lives may normalize. Feel free to provide your take or judgments about our future. If it is time for us to move on, we will. If you trust and love me as your pastor, I will be here if the Lord, Jesus Christ, will have me.

"It is not what happens to us in our lives, it is what we do about it that counts."



"Every human person is sacred and inviolable. To ensure that a society has a future, it is necessary that a sense of respect be matured for the dignity of every person, no matter in what condition they find themselves. Chosen and loved by God, we are called to live "as is fitting among the saints" (Eph 5:3), to clothe ourselves with sentiments of goodness, humility, magnanimity, bearing the fruits of the Spirit."

Pope Francis

May this dear Pope survive his viral bronchitis treatment with antibiotics and leave the hospital having been healed.

A TIME OF GREAT FEAR AND CRISIS – PASTOR’S MESSAGE

These are the times that try everyone’s souls! Like many of you, I receive hundreds of daily messages on Email, Facebook, regular mail, television, text messages and other sources. Everyone wants our advice, money, countless surveys, as we witness daily pictures of death, destruction, and governmental dysfunction.

We may get caught up in all this, absorbing the depressive, the fear that continually comes closer to us, calling us to be afraid, unclear, unsure, and deeply powerless. I can truly say that in every part of my life, I have experienced these kinds of interruptions, however never to this degree of constancy, loudness, with so few notions about just how we can collectively, as human beings, find our way.

Churches are more empty than full. Many have closed or are closing. Yet we go on. We look for new and better ways to be church. The most important element in that is to figure out how to be church together. Not with one person on top, and others below. I have rarely preached from a pulpit. While maybe not evident, I’ve done this because I don’t feel that I am better than any single person who walks into our doors. Not one.

The article written by Michael Moore is tough to read at so many levels. It calls us to see that Guns Don’t Kill People; Americans Kill People. It explores the horrors and history of his receipt of an Oscar for “Bowling for Columbine.” Fear and crisis.

I try to greet people with warmth and reach out to them with love and respect. Not because I am trying to get this or that, but rather because I want to welcome people with a kind of genuine humanity. We’ve had people come to our church from all over the world, from every economic, racial, social, and religious background, and life preferences. One thing we can do is to say, come in. Be welcome here. Feel the spirit working here. Listen to the voices joyously singing. You are always welcome here, no matter what you have said or done in your life.

If you are ashamed, or crying out for help, come. We will try and help. Help us find new ways to do this or that. You may find a friend. We welcome all faith groups including those who have no faith at all but need help or a friend. Holy Week is here. Join us in that journey from death to new life. Let’s all learn from each other and come to see that this broken and fragmented world may slowly come together one piece and step at a time. Come. You are welcome here. Amen.



A PRAYER FOR IMMIGRANTS

SOJOURNERS

by Sandy Ovalle Martinez

We've got work to do. Our immigration system is bound up in all the old ways of this nation: colonialism; Indigenous extermination; the enslavement and lynching of Black people; disregard for the care of creation; dehumanization and fear of immigrants. These old ways must die and, in their place, new ways must be born: a sense that we are bound together so that your wellbeing is my wellbeing; recognition that every person is made in the image of God; a care for the land as our common home; and a commitment to distribute the earth's abundant resources equitably.

Can we commit to building and fighting for life-giving systems and rejecting death-making ones? Could we do this in such a way that we are willing to die to our privilege and our old ways of living so that all may live well? This is my prayer:

May the dominant Western ways of viewing migration die. May we rid ourselves of colonial logic that raped and exterminated native people, forced them to adopt new cultures, extracted their resources, and condemned their medicine as evil. ¡Fuera!

We rebuke the dominant Western ways that kidnapped African people, illegally transported them treating them as merchandise, and enslaved them in a new land that consumed their bodies. ¡Fuera!

We condemn the dominant Western way that seeks to own, is voracious in consumption, and is rampant in its pursuit of material wealth and social status at the expense of migrant labor forces including children. ¡Fuera!

We pray for a restored common human family in harmony with the rest of creation that recognizes our wellbeing is bound to one another and the earth. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for a framework that recognizes each person is inherently worthy of dignity and respect and centers life. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for an insatiable appetite for justice, always recognizing your abundant provision so that we may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and afford everyone a dignified life. Lord, hear our prayer.

Sandy Ovalle Martínez, a native of Mexico City, is director of campaigns and mobilizing at Sojourners.

ATTORNEY GENERAL TONG SUES FOUR GHOST GUN DEALERS FOR ILLEGAL SALES IN CONNECTICUT



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONNECTICUT

MARCH 7, 2023

(Hartford, CT) – Attorney General William Tong **today sued four out-of-state firearm dealers** selling and advertising illegal, untraceable “ghost gun” parts in Connecticut.

On October 1, 2019, Connecticut banned the sale and receipt of unfinished frame and lower receiver gun components lacking serial numbers or unique identification, which are used to build ghost guns. Despite that, defendants Indie Guns of Florida, Steel Fox Firearms of Florida, Hell Fire Armory of North Carolina, and AR Industries of Utah each sold and shipped illegal ghost guns to an undercover investigator from the Office of the Attorney General.

ATTORNEY GENERAL TONG SUES FOUR GHOST GUN DEALERS FOR ILLEGAL SALES IN CONNECTICUT

(continued from page 6)



The four firearm dealers each advertise and sell a variety of firearms and components, including ghost gun components that allow consumers to easily assemble handguns, fully functional AR-15 style automatic rifles, and other untraceable illegal guns. These components are shipped without serial numbers direct to consumers, bypassing federal licensed firearms dealers and background checks. The defendants ship illegal ghost gun parts directly to consumers without confirming whether the consumers are licensed to possess a firearm.

While websites for AR Industries and Steel Fox stated that they would not ship “AR-15 80% Lower Receiver” ghost gun kits to Connecticut, both companies shipped illegal ghost guns to a Connecticut address anyway. Indie Guns and Hell Fire had no warning, notice, or disclaimer.

By selling products that are expressly prohibited under Connecticut law, the lawsuit accuses each company of unfair and deceptive advertising, marketing and sales in violation of the Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act.

“Ghost guns are an untraceable menace that exist for one reason—to evade law enforcement and registration. They are a threat to public safety and they are illegal in Connecticut. If you ship ghost guns into Connecticut, we will find you, stop you, and hold you accountable,” **said Attorney General Tong.** “Indie Guns, Steel Fox Firearms, Hell Fire Armory and AR Industries all knew their ghost guns were illegal in Connecticut and they shipped these weapons to Connecticut anyway. We won’t let them get away with it.”

“The Department of Consumer Protection’s mission is to protect public health and safety. It is hard to imagine a more direct threat to public safety than shipping illegal ghost guns into the State. We look forward to supporting the attorney general in his efforts to take decisive action against this activity,” said Department of Consumer Protection Commissioner Michelle H. Seagull.



CHARGES AGAINST TRUMP MUST BE PURSUED WITHOUT VIOLENCE OR INTIMIDATION



Last night (3/30), Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg issued a criminal indictment against former President Donald Trump for concealing a hush money payment before the 2016 election. In response, Patrick Gaspard, president and CEO at the Center for American Progress, issued the following statement:

No one is above the law, not even an ex-president. Now the legal process should play out in court without political interference. Trump’s efforts to intimidate prosecutors and call on an angry mob of supporters is yet another disgusting effort to incite violence and prevent the legal system from taking its course. There are several other serious investigations underway into Trump’s apparent attempt to overturn the election results in Georgia and his actions to incite an insurrection at the Capitol on January 6. If these investigations lead to criminal charges, it’s paramount to let prosecutors, judges, and juries do their jobs and keep politics out of the courtroom.

ELCA STATEMENT ON ANTI-TRANSGENDER LEGISLATION

by the Rev. Elizabeth A Eaton



As we approach March 31, many people are preparing to recognize Transgender Day of Visibility, an international day to celebrate the contributions of transgender people and raise awareness about the deadly injustices they face.

As bishop of this church, I am concerned that the rights of transgender and nonbinary Americans have been targeted all over this nation. Nearly 400 anti-LGBTQIA+ bills were introduced across the United States in 2022, most of them targeting trans youth. That is twice the number from 2021 and almost eight times the total from 2020. The language in many of these bills attacks the humanity of trans and nonbinary people, often erasing the dignity that should be afforded to everyone.

While members of our church hold various convictions regarding gender, the teaching of our church supports legislation and policies to protect every person's human dignity and civil rights. (Human Sexuality, p. 19) As Christians we believe every human being is created in God's image, and we must honor and celebrate God's creation. Our church teaches that we affirm transgender and nonbinary siblings are God's children, who are loved unconditionally. Our social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019) also declares that this church commits itself to "advocate for and support laws, policies, and practices that respect diverse bodies rather than discriminating against, objectifying, or devaluing them" (p. 60).

I urge us, as people of faith, to love our neighbors, care for the vulnerable and marginalized, and work for justice and equality. We may have differing opinions on "matters related to sexual orientation and gender identity," (FSJ, p. 61) but we must always uphold the dignity and humanity of everyone. These disagreements do not allow us to accept actions that dehumanize, discriminate against or objectify any individual or group.

We must stand together, dear church, faithfully advocating for the full humanity and dignity of all people. Let us recognize and affirm the humanity of our transgender and nonbinary siblings. Let us advocate for their dignity. Let us continue to be guided by God's love and compassion as we seek justice and equality for everyone.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

HOUSING GROUP SEEKING AID OF SUBURBAN CHURCHES

Organizations lobby for bill requiring affordable units
by Susan Dunne



In 1990, Connecticut passed 8-30g, a law to encourage cities and towns to allow affordable housing. Still, for decades, many towns have evaded compliance.

Cori Mackey found that out in 2019, when her organization, Center for Leadership and Justice, relocated 250 Hartford families from slumlord conditions during the "No More Slumlords" campaign. Many wanted to move to the suburbs.

"We could not do it. We tried everything. There are so many barriers to moving outside of

HOUSING GROUP SEEKING AID OF SUBURBAN CHURCHES

(continued from page 8)

Hartford, not the least of which is lack of affordable housing in the communities,” Mackey said. “We are living in Connecticut where many towns actively work to keep people out. It made the systemic barriers seem so real.”

There’s a new initiative this year to make noncompliance with affordable housing goals more difficult. HB6633, now working its way through the state legislature, would require each town in the state to create an affordable housing plan and would penalize municipalities that don’t. Towns were similarly required to create a plan and submit it to the state for June 1, 2022. The Office of Policy and Management shows a few dozen municipalities still have not done so.

The bill passed the Joint Committee on Housing and is now in the Office of Legislative Research and Office of Fiscal Analysis.



Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, of which Mackey also is executive director, is among several organizations lobbying for passage of HB6633. But the group is taking another approach in the battle to increase affordable housing — winning over suburban residents.

The group co-founded the “Welcoming Affordable Housing in the Suburbs” campaign, a series of community talks aimed at educating folks about the need for affordable housing, dispelling myths about affordable housing and suggesting ways to advocate for affordable housing.

The campaign is funded by Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG).

“The barriers to affordable housing are rooted in deep desires to keep our communities the way they are, paired with a misunderstanding of what affordable housing is and what it will do to the suburbs,” Mackey said.

Housing is considered affordable if housing costs are less than a third of household income. There is a shortage of units that are affordable to low-income renters. Units that do exist tend to be concentrated in cities and to be occupied by people of color.

For a town to comply with 8-30g, 10% of its housing stock must be considered affordable. Only a fraction of towns are in compliance with 8-30g. In fact, the share of housing for low-income citizens has declined since 1990. This fact has made Connecticut one of the most racially segregated states in the country.

Damion Morgan, community impact officer at HFPG, said only 31 municipalities in Connecticut have 10% affordable housing.

“There are 169 towns in Connecticut. The large concentration of affordable housing is in high poverty areas,” Morgan said. “There’s more than enough space to go around in every town for affordable housing.”

Peter Harrison of Desegregate Connecticut said HB6633 is necessary because municipal zoning laws, which mandate home lot size and discourage multi-family developments, are at the root of the affordable housing crisis.

“These policies unconsciously or consciously limit housing stock available and raise the cost of housing considerably,” Harrison said. “The connection between class and race means people of color are particularly excluded.”

HOUSING GROUP SEEKING AID OF SUBURBAN CHURCHES

(continued from page 9)

The “Welcoming Affordable Housing in the Suburbs” program was developed by GHIAA with Desegregate Connecticut and Open Communities Alliance. It is presented by the Racial Justice Steering Committee of Rocky Hill Congregational Church, which got the \$10,000 HFPG grant.

The grant was part of HFPG’S advocacy for policy change in state and municipal affordable housing laws. The policy changes are efforts to confront structural and historical racism and how it manifests itself in housing issues.

The first two sessions were March 15 at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Simsbury and March 16 at Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford. Two more events are March 29 at Rocky Hill Congregational Church and April 6 at Rocky Hill Community Center. All events start at 7 p.m. and are free.

Valerie Triblets, co-chair of Rocky Hill Congregational Church Racial Justice Steering Committee, said they applied for the funding last summer, at around the same time an apartment complex with 30% affordable housing was proposed in town. The project was shot down early this year by the town’s Open Space and Conservation Commission.

Triblets said many citizens have misconceptions about affordable housing. Some commenters voiced them at the event in Simsbury on March 15.

“There’s the concept that it will be messy, falling down, of poor construction. Some people say there’s a stigma if you live there. Some say it’ll

make schools overcrowded, it’ll lower property values, it’ll bring crime,” she said. “A lot of the objections are racist. It’s going back to the ideas presented when there was redlining.”

Kari Nicewander of Open Communities Alliance said housing policies that shut out people of color are rooted in the 1926 U.S. Supreme Court case *Euclid vs. Ambler*, which pitted a developer against town zoning laws.

At the church events, Nicewander said racist beliefs are pernicious, widespread and false.

“The idea that affordable housing will drive down property values, there is no evidence to show that. Affordable housing in towns does not, in and of itself, decrease property values,” she said.

The greatest argument in favor of affordable housing, she said, is that it makes it possible for working-class people to live near their jobs.

“We have these towns where teachers, service workers, first responders cannot live in the towns where they work. So they drive in and out. That increases traffic,” she said. “People talk about the environmental impact. But the reality is, people not needing to commute an hour to get to their jobs is far better for the environment.”

Proponents argue affordable housing also allows young people who grow up in a town to settle there and for those who own homes in a town to downsize and continue to live there.



Affordable Housing in our Community

HOUSING GROUP SEEKING AID OF SUBURBAN CHURCHES

(continued from page 10)

Nicewander said HB6633 is necessary because noncompliance with 8-30g will continue without it.

“Without an enforcement mechanism, most towns can keep on zoning the way they have,” she said. “We can live up to what the federal Fair Housing Act is asking of us.”

Morgan said the meetings are necessary because lack of understanding makes people scared of affordable housing.

“These meetings help demystify the thought that affordable housing is bad for the community,” he said. “Affordable housing in Connecticut can only enrich a community. It is needed and it is valued.”

GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, AMERICANS KILL PEOPLE



Twenty years ago tonight, on March 23, 2003, our film, “Bowling for Columbine”, received the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature of the year. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wScIMiWT_dw

But it was also the fifth night of one of the greatest war crimes of the new century — the illegal invasion and bombing of Iraq by George W. Bush and the people of the United States of America. A whopping 72% of the American public backed Bush *and* the war, as did the majority of Democrats in the U.S. Senate. Bush’s cronies — Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Elliott Abrams, etc. — desperate to take control of Iraq’s oil and eliminate Saddam Hussein, concocted a lie claiming Iraq was involved in the 9/11 terrorist attack and that it now possessed weapons of mass destruction.

Of course, Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 (Osama bin Laden plus 15 of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia). And, of course, the U.S. invasion force never found a single weapon of mass destruction. They *did* manage to annihilate hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians, a mass murder of human beings who never threatened any Americans. Nearly 5,000 American troops, sent to kill the Iraqis, were themselves sent to their own senseless slaughter. Their parents and families, to this day, have never been given a reason for what they died for, and no apology has yet to be issued to them for Bush selfishly sacrificing their lives for absolutely nothing but his own personal revenge.

The utter sadness over this premeditated war crime is felt to this day. Bush and Cheney have never been indicted by the International Criminal Court and they remain free to do as they please. Few Democrats have apologized for being their enablers. I find it difficult to celebrate today’s anniversary of us “winning an Oscar” when the only thing we should consider remembering of what happened 20 years ago this week is this crime against humanity, committed in our name against the Iraqi people.

But I will use this “Bowling for Columbine” Substack moment to once again demand that we, **the people**, stop and examine why we have such a thirst for violence, a desire to kill our “enemies,” and an insane fear of “the other” — which causes us to possess nearly 400 million guns in our homes.

GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, AMERICANS KILL PEOPLE

(continued from page 11)

Those who didn't see "Bowling for Columbine" think it's a movie about guns. It isn't. It's about us. Americans. Yes, I know the title references what was, at the time, the worst gun slaughter at a school in our history. There had never been a mass shooting like it. The Colorado cops who showed up at Columbine High that morning, fearing for their lives, refused to enter the high school while the massacre was taking place. For hours they remained frozen outside. Which caused injured students and a teacher to bleed to death. Hundreds of parents showed up — but not one of them charged into the school to stop the massacre of their children. They obeyed the police who told them to stand like sheep behind the yellow "DO NOT CROSS" police tape line. One child's uncle broke through that police line to make a run into the school. The cops tackled him and dragged him away.

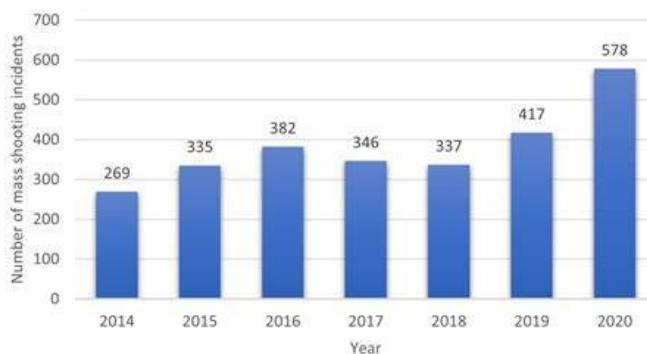
There was no plan of action, nobody knew what to do because it had never happened before. In 1999, a mass shooting at a school was not "a thing." It was *non-existent*. I didn't say "rare." I said **non-existent** — there were no mass school shootings in the United States back in 1999.

That afternoon, my crew and I (who were working on our weekly TV series, The Awful Truth) stopped production and sat down to talk about the shock over what we were witnessing. We decided we should act, to begin gathering footage, to figure out what we should do. One thing we felt certain of: This may be the first such school shooting in the U.S. ever on this scale, but we also knew the country we lived in — and we knew this wouldn't be the last. We decided on the spot to immediately begin making a movie that hopefully would prevent anything like this from happening again. I called the Canadian studio that was funding our TV series to ask them if they would fund a film on American gun craziness — and they didn't even wait 30 seconds before saying yes and giving us the entire budget we needed to make what would become "Bowling for Columbine".

(Note: No American studio or financier would agree to be the primary funder of a single one of my films or TV shows for my first 20 years as a filmmaker, even though my first movie, "Roger & Me", set the all-time documentary box office record. We went to the Canadians for help to make "the gun movie" because we lived in a country where Democrats and liberals were frightened of the National Rifle Association and refused to fight them on any level — including in Hollywood. The Canadians, they were just frightened of living next door to a nation of gun

nuts, killers, and invaders of Third World countries. So they gave refuge to our Vietnam draft

Mass shooting incidents in the US
2014 to 2020



resisters, they refused to join us in invading Iraq, and they funded our film.)

As I said, we decided "the gun" would not be the star of our movie. We actually sort of agreed with the NRA's propaganda line — "Guns Don't Kill People. People Kill People." Except we decided to change it to the truth: "Guns Don't Kill People — **Americans** Kill People." Because we are the only country on Earth who kills so many of their own in this way. And why is that? Why us? What is it specifically about *us*? Was it our American DNA? Just like us, though, many on this planet have committed mass genocide.

There is a huge mental illness problem

throughout the world. Every country's teenagers watch violent movies, play violent video games. Why not them? Why don't they slaughter each other like we do? Why don't they have millions of guns in their homes?

We thought if we could answer this question of "what is wrong with us," then maybe we could

GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, AMERICANS KILL PEOPLE

(continued from page 12)

help fix this madness. Our madness.

So we decided to make a documentary that asked the audience to join us in trying to answer this crucial question. The film never accomplished its first goal — to make Columbine the **first and last** of these mass shootings, these school shootings. We now have, on average, more than 1 mass shooting a day in the U.S. Guns are now the #1 cause of death among American children. More than cancer. More than auto accidents. Guns. And yet no one here hangs their head in shame. We just hope our school, our child, isn't next. And, if they are, well, millions of Americans will be sure to send us their thoughts and prayers. So on this anniversary tonight of our fellow filmmakers handing us a gold statue while our bombs rained down on Baghdad, I'm going to sit quietly at home and watch "Bowling for Columbine" and think anew about what else I can do to help fix our American soul.

In this month since the mass shooting at Michigan State University, I have not written to you about it. I've pretty much stuck to my 2013 promise after the Sandy Hook massacre to turn down all calls from cable news to have "the Bowling for Columbine guy" come on TV to discuss the latest school shooting. I did that for 11 years between "Bowling for Columbine" and Sandy Hook, and then one night I was on Piers Morgan who had replaced Larry King on CNN. Sitting there discussing the 20 dead first graders (and 6 adult school staff), I felt sick knowing what I knew about the tragedy, the way the children actually died, the devastating grief of their parents who may never truly recover, the killer whose father was a vice-president of General Electric (the press never wanting to sully the narrative by reporting that insignificant fact), and none of their reporters wanting to go just three miles down the road from the school and dare to walk through the doors of the national headquarters of the gun manufacturers association, euphemistically called the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the chief corporate lobbying group stopping gun control laws from being passed in America. They're the main group responsible for keeping the AR-15 assault rifle — the weapon of choice for a majority of the school, church and workplace mass shootings — readily and easily available. Their HQ of evil, just down the road from the school where 26 souls lay dead.



Shortly after Sandy Hook, the state of Connecticut literally passed a law aimed specifically at me because I said somewhere that I was going to make a film about Sandy Hook. So they made it a crime for me to obtain the truth and pass it on to you and the American public. I don't really want to say anything more about this, because the other truth is that I've spent time over the past ten years working on something...and, well, I'll just end it here by saying you can pass whatever "laws" you want, but if

you've figured out one thing about me by now it's that there's no way to stop me or my crew from imparting to the American people what you don't want them to see or know. I'm sorry. That's just the way it is. I'm an American. Freedom. Press. Truth. The majority of us (70%) **don't** own a gun, the vast majority (79%) want stronger gun control laws, and the many, *many* of us know that *none* of this will change until we all change as Americans — and I believe most of us will settle for nothing less. We, the majority, now reject the Violent America, the one that killed off the First Peoples who lived here, the Violent America that was built on the backs of enslaved humans who were repeatedly raped and forced to give birth, who were tortured and lynched, and now we are not supposed to teach our children of this history. We remain the Violent America because lying to children and enforcing ignorance and stupidity upon them is an act of violence. All racism and misogyny and homophobia is an act of violence. Destroying the Earth is violence. The rich getting richer at the expense of the poor is violence. Capitalism is violence. Greed is violence. Silence is violence! Our national

women's gymnastics team being assaulted and raped by a university doctor, and then no one listening to these young women, THAT is violence. The violence is everywhere. Yes, I know, it's everywhere around the world. But the American violence is its own breed. It's because we've figured out how to normalize it, to make it not something that we just do, but rather to make it exactly who we are. To simply accept that we all know there will be at least one mass shooting today, and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and ad infinitum is immoral. "I AM YOUR RETRIBUTION!!" we are promised. It just rolls off the tongue. One day a few years ago, Glenn Beck began a segment on his massively popular radio show with this line: "I'm thinking about killing Michael Moore." He then went into a fantasy rant on how he would kill me, wondering if he could get away with it, could he muster the courage to actually kill me when he's wearing a wrist band that says, "What Would Jesus Do?" And then he suggested maybe Jesus might give him a pass this one time.

Or the day a Fox News host was pondering live on air, "How is it that Michael Moore is still alive?"

Michigan State. They're the only university that would give me a degree. Not one I earned. I'm a college dropout. They gave me an honorary degree. A doctorate! Some right-wingers in Michigan were upset when they heard the news this was going to happen, so MSU was forced to also give one to the conservative columnist George Will. When it was my turn to speak at the Honors dinner the night before, he stood up from his seat on the dais and walked out in front of the whole audience. A month later a local investigative reporter ran a story revealing that, in order to get Will to come and accept his honorary degree, he told MSU they'd have to pay him \$47,500 to come to East Lansing for the privilege of his presence. *Of course, I received no fee nor would I ever ask for one.* I got the degree my parents always wanted me to have!! Secretly handing George Will his required payoff to placate Michigan's haters of me, well, that's a form of violence, too.

I haven't been able to write about the MSU shooting because the night it happened it became personal for me for reasons I can't discuss here because, well, for reasons you can probably figure out. There are 50,000 students at Michigan State. That means that for one to three long, grueling hours on that awful night last month there were 100,000 parents who experienced a holy terror of not being able to contact their sons or daughters. *Is my child one of those who've been shot? Is she...dead?* How many of these parents simply broke down? How many just broke in two, fearing the worst? Uncontrollable sobbing, screaming, rushing to the car to drive at 80mph to get to East Lansing to save your baby. These 50,000 kids also had 4 grandparents (most of them still living), so that's almost 200,000 grandparents hearing the news and going into shock. Most MSU students have siblings, so kick in another 100,000 people who knew exactly what it felt like because this is the Columbine Generation and they've known nothing but "Active Shooter Drills" they've been forced to participate in since they were in daycare. So, counting just the immediate family members who were affected by the terror at MSU that night, it had to total nearly a half-million people. And as I thought of what they were all going through... in that moment all I could do was cry. No one should have to experience the trauma and terror of that night in a free country.

96 years ago this May 18th, in 1927, my grandfather, who was the village doctor in Hadley, Michigan, received an urgent phone call, one of many that were being made to all doctors within a 40-mile radius. My grandfather was a Canadian immigrant who was a farmer who became a teacher who decided he wanted to be a doctor but there was no medical school nearby in 1890s Ontario. It was closer to go to the one in Saginaw, Michigan, and back then you could teach students everything that was known about medicine in about one year. Once he graduated, he decided to stay in Michigan.

On that day in 1927, the caller said there had been an accident. A building had collapsed, or perhaps a gas leak had caused an explosion. There were many casualties and doctors were needed. Pronto. My grandfather grabbed his medical bag and drove 40 miles to Bath, a village located just a few miles from Michigan State University. When he arrived it was a sight he had never witnessed before. Dead bodies everywhere, mostly children. It was a new school — built 5 years earlier for the children of Bath and the surrounding farmland. The school board's treasurer was angry that his property taxes had been raised to pay for the building. He was also upset that he, a Michigan State graduate, had lost the recent election to become township clerk. So he decided to blow up the Bath school. He planted dynamite under the floor and in the basement and attached the wires to an alarm clock that was set to go off 15 minutes after class started. The explosion killed 45 people, nearly 40 of them schoolchildren. Two teachers and the superintendent were also killed. Another 58 lay injured and were treated by the doctors like my grandfather who had shown up. Those still alive were then taken to Lansing's Sparrow Hospital, a hospital that had been funded by the uncle of the killer's wife, the top General Motors executive who ran Oldsmobile in nearby Lansing. Sparrow Hospital was where the eight MSU students shot on campus last month were taken in an attempt to save their lives. Three, sadly, were dead on arrival.

The Bath, Michigan Schoolhouse Massacre was, and remains to this day, the largest school massacre in American history.

We are a violent people, but the majority of us have had enough. What will we do? Get rid of the guns? Get rid of our dark side? Stop sending weapons around the world without the requirement that peace negotiations must commence. Force the warring parties to the table! Insist that each of us remove the fear and the hate that surrounds us, the hate that forces those to pick up and use a gun. Yes, I'm talking about the police. But I'm talking about your uncle, your brother. I'm talking about any of you who are depressed and have thought about killing yourself. Call for help (9-8-8). Think of me and know that I care and I love you. There is a different way. There has to be.

This is not a drill.

REBALANCING THE LOWER COURTS

by Michael Waldman

Constitution watchers brace for upcoming Supreme Court rulings on the Voting Rights Act, affirmative action, and the "independent state legislature theory." The Marble Palace on First Street gets most of the attention. In the meantime, federal judges across the country are showing us what happens when the lower courts are stuffed with right-wing ideologues.

After a hearing last week, Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk in Amarillo, Texas, is expected to soon rule on an outlandish demand to ban the use of the abortion pill mifepristone — medication used for more than half of all abortions in the United States. If the judge rules to revoke the decades-old FDA approval for the pill, he will affect not just women in Texas, but women in every state.

How can a single federal judge have such power over the medical decisions of more than 167 million people? Believe it or not, the Supreme Court has never ruled on whether nationwide injunctions are constitutional. Liberals used this tactic on occasion to block the Trump administration's policies, such as the single judge who blocked the "Muslim ban" in 2017. But conservatives have undeniably perfected it.

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE
The Briefing

In Texas, a quirk of the rules lets people choose where they bring a federal lawsuit and essentially handpick the judge who will hear their case — judge shopping to boost the chances of a favorable ruling. When a plaintiff files a federal suit in Amarillo, they are 100 percent guaranteed to get Kacsmaryk, a judge with a reputation as a Federalist Society militant. His sister recently told reporters it was his mission to end abortion in the United States. He has called homosexuality “disordered.” He made the government reinstate the Trump-era “Remain in Mexico” policy, which was later overturned by the Supreme Court. Such a track record would make him the ideal judge for anti-abortion groups seeking someone sympathetic to their case.

Worse, Kacsmaryk may be readying his abortion pill ruling based on the brand-new “major questions doctrine,” which is all of nine months old. First articulated in a case last year that slashed the Environmental Protection Agency’s regulatory power, the doctrine claims federal agencies need clear congressional authorization to act on issues that have “major” economic or political significance. This conveniently flexible legal theory is poised to be the go-to reasoning for right-wing judges to block any policies they don’t like.

The Texas case isn’t the only evidence of the impact of skewed lower courts. The Supreme Court’s sweeping decision in *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*, which held that gun laws must pass the test of “history and tradition” rather than public safety, has led to judicial rulings that verge on satirical. One federal judge in western New York blocked most of the state’s new gun law, declaring he could find no colonial-era law banning guns in summer camps, which, of course, did not exist at the time. And surprise, surprise, he found no trace of 18th-century prohibitions on guns in subways, either. Though he let the ban on guns in churches stand, another New York judge ruled shortly afterward that this restriction, too, was ahistorical.

Just last month, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued a truly outrageous ruling that upheld domestic abusers’ right to keep their guns. The court cited a lack of examples of early American laws against domestic violence. Voila, no protections in 2023.

Other examples abound, and there will no doubt be many more to come. Trump isn’t only responsible for appointing three Supreme Court justices — he appointed 226 federal judges during his presidency. They were overwhelmingly pre-vetted by the Federalist Society.

These appointments have left a lasting impact, and there is an urgent need to rebalance the scales of the federal judiciary. Last week, the Judicial Conference of the United States, led by Chief Justice John Roberts, recommended adding 68 federal judges to the courts to meet demanding new workloads. This would be a good step toward countering the partisanship plaguing the courts. But most importantly, we need to understand the significance of what has happened with the federal courts.

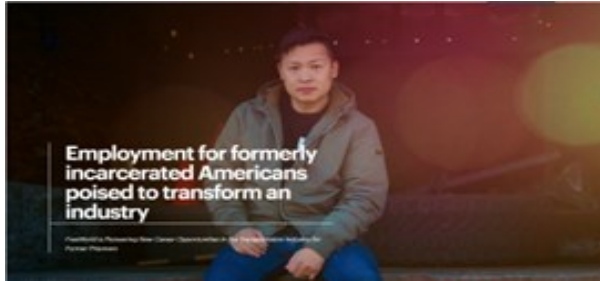
We cannot let one judge with a gavel and a grudge govern our country.

**EMPLOYMENT FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED AMERICANS
POISED TO TRANSFORM AN INDUSTRY**

Jason Wang’s worst moment came in his home driveway at age 15. While his mother watched in shock, he was arrested for aggravated robbery and began a four-year journey through the California prison system.

Jason had been on a path to prison his entire life: born into poverty, raised by an abusive father, and groomed by a gang. His arrest put the final nail in place to seal himself into a cycle of prison,





recidivism, poverty, and hopelessness that defines generations of American families.

But Jason's story didn't end in a downward spiral.

Today, Jason is the head of a pioneering nonprofit called FreeWorld. His organization lifts people who have been in prison into successful careers and gives them the stabilizing support systems to

experience healthy families and fulfilling work. FreeWorld is a model for reducing recidivism, improving public safety, and progressing towards a better future.

"I found myself being frightened crossing the street. It had been so long since I'd seen a car that everything was moving too fast."

Jason's journey through prison gave him a painful understanding of the invisible struggles of incarcerated Americans. Small things like using a smartphone and even depth perception wither when you're on the inside. "After years of being incarcerated, reintegrating into society is quite challenging," says Jason. "I found myself being frightened crossing the street because it had been so long since I'd seen a car that everything felt like it was moving too fast."

People who have been in prison face more serious problems, too. On release, they often lack basic identification documents: a driver's license, social security card, or birth certificate. Without such basic forms of identification, it is nearly impossible to get a job.

Compounding this problem is the lack of support that these men and women experience. Many have no transportation, little to no education, and no access to job training programs. Many also come from communities that are trapped in poverty.

Jason's saving grace came from a personal connection.

"When I was incarcerated," he recalls, "my mom used to drive 14 hours every single weekend just to visit me in prison for two hours. And she used to say, 'Even though you're physically incarcerated, I'm locked up with you.'"

"She always used to say, 'Don't forget who you are. You're a good person, despite everything that's happening around you.' And she helped me feel human again."

Jason doesn't point blame at anyone for the dehumanizing experience he endured in prison or afterwards. He holds himself accountable for the robbery that landed him in jail, and also recognizes the influences that pushed him to that point.

But he is also uniquely positioned to transform the systems and attitudes that restrict formerly incarcerated Americans who try to move on from the worst day of their lives.

"I'm empathetic toward parole officers because they're under-resourced and understaffed," Jason says. "They're not getting the resources to connect people to current job opportunities that are available today."

And the jobs that are available to people who have been in prison pay \$12,000 per year on average. That's less than a quarter of the median household income in the United States. Jason found that often employers fall into the cultural bias trap believing that former prisoners cannot make trustworthy

employees. Denial from higher-paying jobs compounds with the steep financial recovery from years in prison to make what Jason calls “invisible handcuffs.”

“The path of least resistance is down and back, right back into prison.

Providing legitimate first chances for people who have been in prison

Jason’s painfully personal understanding of these barriers formed his idea for the nonprofit that would become FreeWorld. In prison, FreeWorld” is a slang term for the world outside the gates; its opportunities and promise. Jason’s organization subscribes to that promise.

“I don’t think that many of our students have ever had a legitimate first chance in life,” Jason says. “You get born into a world of poverty. You never had a chance to begin with. And so at FreeWorld, our tag line is ‘Providing Legitimate First Chances.’ We’re going to invest in you. We don’t care about your history. We don’t care about your past. All we care about is your future.”

FreeWorld got its start when Jason met and partnered with Matt Mochary, a veteran entrepreneur and CEO coach. With Matt’s help, Jason built a team of people, most of whom had been in prison themselves.

FreeWorld supports, trains, and leverages jobs for formerly incarcerated people, empowering them to build fulfilling and successful lives. Jason’s reason for hiring former prisoners isn’t for publicity or empathy. He recognized from his own experience that the people closest to the problem are the ones best equipped to solve it. All they need are the resources.

Jason saw commercial trucking as an area ripe with opportunity. A massive problem in the trucking industry right now is the lack of qualified labor. More drivers are needed to transport goods across the country. Couple this with the fact that formerly incarcerated people face fewer barriers to obtaining a commercial driver’s license compared to other careers, and you have a wide open opportunity.

The company receives roughly 1,000 applications and graduates 200 students per year, directly placing them into jobs in the trucking industry. By the end of 2023, Jason expects to double those results.

FreeWorld’s 10-year goal is to graduate and place 100,000 students into jobs every year. As ambitious as that goal sounds, that is less than one-sixth of the prisoners released in America every year. The potential to grow and effect change is enormous.

With numbers rising, FreeWorld plans to expand into more careers that are in high demand like welding, construction, and even computer coding.

FreeWorld is breaking barriers to employment

FreeWorld is riding on a lot of innovative processes in order to scale this model and empower more people to realize their potential. “We’ve heavily leveraged technology to solve immediate needs immediately,” Jason says.

Their application process can all be done online, as can the first instructional classes. FreeWorld uses several online programs to shortcut the months-long process of getting personal identification documents down to a couple of weeks. Using technology to leap over problems that traditional methods struggle to solve lets FreeWorld accelerate the success of its students.

This is all happening alongside their 45-day training program that starts with online learning, then transitions students to a local partnering CDL (Commercial Drivers License) school.

Students are paid \$2,000 for living expenses during the program so they can concentrate on schooling without having to worry about extra work hours. Students who don't have access to personal transportation are set up with FreeWorld's Uber service to take them to classes.

All this is funded by FreeWorld and by an income-sharing agreement. Graduates who go into successful trucking jobs pay 10% of their earnings back over five years. The money funds students coming up behind them and builds a unique community of support and encouragement.

"Once you've got about two years of experience, you can earn \$80,000 – \$120,000 a year," says Jason.

"Once you have three years of experience, we have an entrepreneurship program where we will actually help you start up your own trucking company. And today, we have three graduates who have gone through our program; who have started trucking companies and are now hiring our new students coming out of school."

"We want to be in every parole office all across the nation" to help formerly incarcerated people

Jason has his sights set high. "We're putting the right things in place in order to be successful longer. This is a marathon, not a sprint." "What's important for me is to continue this work and find a pathway towards actually ending mass-incarceration," he says, referring to the explosion in prison populations that began in the 1980s and has failed to make communities safer.

"How can we create an organization that can reach incredible scale over the next 10 years and can we use that scale to essentially start to influence policy, to influence public advocacy? And getting people into high-wage jobs outside of prison seems to be that pathway."

Jason envisions FreeWorld as the go-to option for formerly incarcerated people in America. "We want to be in every parole office all across the nation," he says with an eye towards the mutual benefit that comes with reducing recidivism (the rate at which people who leave prison return). "We now serve 1,400 people all across the nation. We have a less than 2% recidivism rate and our graduates are now taking care of their families. They're eliminating all of their debt, they're tax-paying citizens, and we're saving the state and federal government millions of dollars in re-incarceration costs while keeping our communities safe."

Jason and Matt Mochary looked at two problems, recidivism in the prison system and labor shortage in the transportation industry, and found a solution by pairing them together.

It's the definition of a win-win – not only for the students and employers, but also their communities and the country. By taking a direct approach to creating more opportunities for the formerly incarcerated, FreeWorld is empowering former prisoners to forge new identities, not simply find new jobs.

"What would you do if you were only known for the worst thing you've ever done?" Jason asks.

"Take a second to think about that. Would that be a liar, cheater, thief? What would your future look like if that was your identity? Because that is what the men and women in my program go through on a daily basis. By giving people real opportunities to build a life for themselves, this helps the nation move forward as a society."

Learn more about **Stand Together's criminal justice reform efforts.**



By Associated Press (AP)

Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets in Israel over the past three months to protest Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to overhaul the country's judiciary. The protests have drawn from a broad swath of Israeli society: young and old, religious and secular, residents of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and beyond.

Wearing "Handmaid's Tale" costumes, carrying sharp-witted signs and flying the ubiquitous blue-and-white national flag, protesters have blocked main highways and disrupted daily life in their effort to fight Netanyahu's ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox government.

On Monday (3/27), Netanyahu bowed to the discontent by announcing a delay in the plan and saying that he wanted "to avoid civil war" by seeking a compromise with political opponents during the next several weeks.

ADDRESSING BIDEN'S PROPOSED ASYLUM BAN



International
Institute of
New England



Ascentria
CARE ALLIANCE
Empowering People. Strengthening Communities.

The Administration's proposed rule would ban people from seeking asylum in the U.S. if they don't apply for asylum in another country first, or don't make an appointment with a Customs and Border office through a mobile application.

Ascentria Care Alliance and the International Institute of New England are human services organizations that have been welcoming and serving immigrants in New England communities for over a century.

While our organizations understand the pressure that President Biden is under to address the influx of migrant families and individuals along the southern border, the United States has a proud tradition of being a safe haven for asylum seekers who are vulnerable members of society, fleeing war-torn countries and situations of extreme danger.

It is our duty to provide them with a fair and just process to seek refuge in our country. An asylum transit ban is contrary to this country's self-proclaimed status and long history as a beacon of liberty.

The Biden Administration's proposed rule would ban people from seeking asylum in the U.S. if they do not apply for asylum in another country first or do not make an appointment with a Customs and Border office through a mobile application.

This is completely contrary to our fundamental values of providing refuge and protection to those who are fleeing persecution, violence, or other threats to their lives.

Moreover, it violates the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which allows people seeking protection to apply for asylum regardless of the manner of entry, and it does not require people to apply for asylum elsewhere first.

Notwithstanding the humanitarian argument, there are other critical arguments to make in support of open asylum and immigrant welcome:

- **Economic benefit:** Immigrants offer our struggling economy a critical source of much-needed labor across industries in the U.S., and in New England in particular. A glaring example is the healthcare systems in Massachusetts and New Hampshire that are crumbling due to staff shortages, putting patients at risk, and leaving thousands without care. A reduction in immigrants allowed to enter with work eligibility will exacerbate an already critical shortage. Ascentria and IINE have spent years developing partnerships and initiatives that address medical staff shortages in both states by creating a pathway for licensed medical professionals from other countries to be medically trained to work in nursing homes and other healthcare facilities.
- **Child protection:** Under the proposed asylum transit ban, children will still be allowed entry into the U.S. if they arrive unaccompanied but will be turned away if they arrive with family members. This policy will exacerbate family separation at the border and will continue to put desperate children at unforgiveable risk.

We call on policymakers to recognize the importance of a fair and humane asylum system that allows people to seek protection and find safety from persecution.

Says Angela Bovill, CEO and President of Ascentria, "Now is the time to work together in partnership with the Administration to create innovative solutions that address the challenges our nation faces at this crossroads. Working together we can find ways to ensure those seeking asylum in the United States can reunite with their families and pursue a path to citizenship; make available a critical source of much-needed labor in the U.S to fill jobs and make our entire economy stronger, and manage the influx of migrant families and individuals along the southern border."

We stand with asylum seekers and will continue to advocate for their rights and protection. Ascentria and IINE will be offering a formal response to the Proposed Rules within the 30-day time period. We will also monitor and provide input as the "The Dream Act of 2023" moves forward with bipartisan co-sponsorship from Sen. Dick Durbin and Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Your voice also matters. Please submit a public comment or contact your legislators with stories of impact.

<https://www.aila.org/about/announcements/take-action-stop-the-biden-administrations-propo>

SPRING CLEAN UP: SATURDAY APRIL 15TH: 9:00-2:00

by Nancy Urban

We have the rakes, gloves, bags, rags—all we need are the PEOPLE!

Come join in with others at Grace on Saturday, April 15 from 9:00-2:00.

It is time to wash down some woodwork and dust some corners within the building.
It is time to rake up the leaves, take out the dead ends of plants, clean up the sticks and be ready to enjoy the bursting forth of spring.

Something for everyone.

A lunch will be served. 2-3 people to prepare, serve and clean up.

Front yard clean up

Back yard clean up

Flower beds

Inside woodwork

12:00-1:00—Being a good neighbor, we will have a Team that goes on Niles and Farmington to pick up litter.

T-shirts for all the workers. 1-2 people to help distribute.



RAIN DATE: SAT. APRIL 22

APRIL 2023 BIRTHDAYS!

Happy Birthday April!



*May you all be blessed as
you celebrate your
special days!*



Did we miss your birthday or anniversary?
Contact the office at 860-527-7792 or
email office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com
to update our records.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Sunday, April 2nd—Palm Sunday

Thursday, April 6th—Maundy Thursday

Friday, April 7th—Good Friday



Sunday, April 9th—Easter Sunday

*Look for the Easter Flower order form in the Bulletin—The cost per
flower is \$24 and the deadline for submitting the order form is 4/2.*



Saturday, April 15th—Spring Clean-up—9 a.m. to 2 p.m. (Rain date is April 22nd)

Sunday, April 23rd—GHIAA Core Team Meeting—Urban's—2 to 4 pm.

Friday and Saturday, June 9 & 10th—New England Synod Assembly, Worcester, MA



Grace Lutheran Church
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Hartford, CT 06105



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Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker,
Artist in Residence

Walter Scott, Sexton

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Gladys Jackson, Secretary

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

www.graceistheplace.org

