

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Letter from the editor

COVID-19 did the big reveal. It has shown us how we have normalized injustice and inequality. It has exposed what we have done to our society and each other. It has put us in a place, maybe like never before, where we have come to recognize fragments of our privilege. Not the big obvious ones. The tiny ones. The subtle ones. The one we carry with us as solidarity activists, advocates, and allies.

When we commit to the hard work of solidarity, we always bring with us fragments of our privilege, “which include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability to think, to want, and to know.” As Paulo Friere notes, “They talk about the people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust.”

What COVID-19 has done is push us to make radical insurrectionary demands for transformation. It is time to abolish oppressive institutions. It is time to create new models of just and equitable arrangements of power. No, delete that. It is time to support and make room for silenced voices to lead us into just, reparative, and equitable arrangements of power.

For far too long, we have known that the policing system was set up to enforce a hierarchy. But today, we have the opportunity

to join and strengthen the movement to dismantle it. In the United States, the Black community is leading the way to defund the police and reinvest these resources from a militarized system that kills Black people to a vibrant and healthy Black community. At CPT, we want to take a step back, trust, and make room for that leadership. And we thought it only appropriate to make room on our front cover.

Solidarity has become more challenging when governments are taking advantage of the current pandemic to push forward policies that harm the most vulnerable. Over 70 social activists have been assassinated in Colombia this year. The movement of armed actors remains unabated, while activists stay home. In Palestine, the Israeli government is going forward with its plans to annex the West Bank. And in Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey launched an aerial bombing operation putting the lives of our partners and their community in grave danger.

We must stand together at this time. The system, as it is, must fall. If we are to move forward, the voices that need to be centered are those of our partners. Building partnerships and transforming oppressions requires us not only to take action for peace, but to decenter ourselves, to trust, and to support the leadership of our partners, even when its “Covid” scary out there.

In kindness,

Caldwell Manners
Communications Coordinator



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Out of sight out of mind

By Mona El Zuhairi

A virus didn’t differentiate between race, gender, age or class; our systems did.

My colleague once told me, “Most white people have reached the point where they are blind to their privilege because they were born into institutional racism.” I would add that it is not only racism but institutionalized intersectional oppression. We live in an interconnected world; race is only one part of it.

In the last few weeks, many people have been surprised by two items publicized in the media:

- Statistics that have shown black people in the U.S. have a higher rate per capita of COVID-19 diagnoses than white people
- Two French doctors who suggested testing COVID-19 vaccines in Africa.

Why are people surprised?

If I wanted to use *Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development* to assess the attitude of the majority of the adult world, especially in this time of Covid-19, most people would fall in the pre-occupational stage. This developmental stage represents children who are about 2-7 years old. Children in this stage act as though the world revolves around them and, exhibit behaviors in line with the proverb “out of sight, out of mind”.

White people believe that race is not part of how the world is divided anymore. They don’t see it anymore in restaurants or cinemas as people used to in the southern United States or South Africa. People of color have the same entrance now to public places, and they don’t see apartheid as clearly as it was historically.

But those examples of white supremacy heritage—the division and allotting inferior resources to people who are not white—are still ruling the world. How they manifest

themselves has changed, but they are still operating.

For example, seventy-nine percent of African Americans had health coverage in 2009 compared to 88% of white Americans. (Russell, 2010)

According to the APM Research LAB “The COVID-19 mortality rate for Black Americans is 2.8 times higher than the rate for Asians, three times higher than the rate for Latinos, and 3.6 times higher than the rate for White Americans.”

In another example from China, in late January to mid-March in Guangzhou, local shops refused to provide service to black people as the percentage showed that 76% of the imported cases were from Africa. (Sun, 2020)

Regarding the white public reactions toward the French doctors suggesting Covid vaccines be tested on Africans: first, the responses were inadequate. I think white people need to start acting proactively instead of reactively toward racism. But the doctors’ comments did not come out of the blue; it is a common practice by big pharmaceutical companies to maneuver around the ethics and regulations for financial reasons and not only in the face of COVID-19. In 2005, 40% of medical trials happened in developing countries. Africa attracts pharmaceutical trials for several reasons, including low access to quality healthcare, epidemiological transition, a fast-growing population, a rising middle class, and rapid economic growth (WEMOS, 2017).

The time has come for everyone to rise-up and begin thinking and acting in proactive ways—not only against racism but against all types of oppression that divide the world based on absurd reasons. ■

Necropolitical frontiers: Who is allowed to live?

By N.U.



Photo: Chad Briggs, Flickr

“The new necropolitical frontier has shifted from the coast of Greece toward the door of your home. Lesbos now starts at your doorstep. And the border is forever tightening around you, pushing you ever closer to your body.”*

- Paul. B. Preciado

What is the meaning of living on a border island, and how much did this meaning expand during the quarantine period? 2020 had a difficult beginning for Lesbos Island. As the conditions in Moria camp worsened uncontrollably, obstacles became difficult to overcome between island residents, migrants, and solidarity activists. Self-organization and demonstrations among migrants have become more frequent than ever. Racist attacks rapidly increased and many were terrorized. Representatives of right-wing parties and members of far-right groups from different countries around Europe wanted to come to the island to intervene in the situation, but the island's anti-fascist group sent them back with a clear message.

Then, news of the epidemic began to spread worldwide and COVID-19 reached the island in early March. It arrived in Lesbos with a Greek woman who had returned from the holy land, not, as everyone had feared and predicted, from migrants. Then two more cases entered, this time with a couple returning from their holiday in Thailand. Fortunately, coronavirus did not like the island or Moria camp. What we feared the most did not happen. In the end, after a total of six cases and one loss of life, the coronavirus was caught on one of the island's strong winds and went to unknown places.

The coronavirus made the borders that were invisible to the privileged suddenly visible to all: the border between the island of Lesbos and mainland Greece, which Westerners could cross easily; the borders between Schengen countries**; the border between Turkey and Greece that many died crossing but the privileged could cross safely with a 10 Euro ticket. During quarantine, everyone experienced being trapped on the island together. A Swiss friend was telling me that for the first time he felt that his passport did not give him the freedom to travel, and how strange this feeling was. For the first time, I, who had dealt with visas and borders throughout my life, felt the impossibility of reaching loved ones in my country, which I saw every day in front of me, on the other side of the border, in Turkey.

So did the visibility of the borders equalize us? Of course not. Those who had difficulties getting water to wash their hands if by chance they find some soap; who were waiting for hours in the meal lines of Moria camp in big crowds while social distancing warnings were repeated worldwide, who did not have the right to benefit from the most basic

healthcare, their asylum interviews postponed for unknown dates; those prisoners on hunger strike in the “pre-removal” detention center of Moria who were suppressed by brutal police force or the new arrivals on the island who were quarantined not for 14 days but indeterminately, who for more than a month, sometimes in the rain, were held on the beaches, without tents, without even a camp ... did this pandemic bring equality to them?

Although it seems that for now, we got away without incident, the days were full of precariousness, fear, and paranoia, with migrants locked down in the camp during the quarantine period. The government response to Covid-19 has created the conditions of a closed migrant camp on the island, which it had constantly proposed and postponed, and now it has acted on its desire to keep it. Turning the camp into a detention facility that migrants cannot leave has always been a desire of the government so that it could impose discipline and control. The pandemic has created the grounds to allow the system to enclose unwanted bodies, and the steps it is taking now are giving signals that Moria camp will remain closed from now on.

If the virus is foreign and “other” by definition, recent days have made us question some things. Which stranger is the danger? What is a stranger? The stranger who is thought to be across the border has infiltrated everywhere, and we don't know if it's there or not. Unlike the migrant stranger, who will appear even if you try to make them invisible, this stranger is invisible even if you want to see it. Maybe even in the air you just breathed, or settling on you. Here, unlike the strangers you made invisible, it captured you with its invisibility. It was your biggest fear.

“Foreigners” who are not accepted in Western society, workers who are forced to work during the quarantine period, those who do not have a home while the hashtags called for us to stay at home, will rise against those who make them worthless and sacrifice them to a virus. Preciado is right. As the oppressed, to survive in this society, it is time to learn from the coronavirus and mutate. Nobody accepts that these conditions will continue. The self-organized demonstrations in Moria during the lockdown period are proof of this.

*Necropolitics is the use of social and political power to dictate how some people may live and how some must die. The term was first used by Cameroonian philosopher, Achille Mbembe.

**Schengen Countries are European Union countries who do not require passports to cross their mutual borders.

Reflecting on the Coronavirus lockdowns

By Rebekah Dowling

An Australian friend told me the other day that a strong case of nostalgia is floating about at the moment. As the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown continue, it seems many of us here in Australia are forced to reflect on our lives—one of the casualties of time alone.

Those of us dreaming of a new world have a sense of hope. Maybe all this time to reflect will cause people to see the problems in the world and make positive changes for peace in their relationships and on a global scale. Maybe they will see the inequality in government actions and global capitalism and insist on change.

Lockdowns stopped what governments

considered “non-essential” work. Here in Australia that included things like community social spaces, food vans, public libraries, and even selling the Big Issue, a street newspaper. The authorities are arresting protesters and levying hefty fines against them, even though they are practicing social distancing. Meanwhile, the government keeps the mines and military up and running. New surveillance apps are being introduced and the Australian government agreed to 3000 U.S. troops arriving in Darwin, despite the continuing high rates of coronavirus transmission in the USA.

Meanwhile in Iraqi Kurdistan, it has been

much the same situation. The government has enacted lockdowns to ensure safety for civilians but they are also using this crisis. The Kurdistan Regional Government began covertly building a military base in Warte, and arresting journalists and civil activists who opposed its efforts. The lockdown has forced people with limited financial resources into further poverty. Families who usually survive on the income they make day to day were forced to stop their jobs. One of my teammates in Kurdistan told me how their neighbors, a Syrian refugee family, had knocked on their family's door and explained how the lockdown had left them without money for food or heating. This family is certainly not an isolated case. As the protestors in Lebanon cried, “I would rather die of coronavirus than starvation.”

For a second there were some hopeful indicators. Carbon emissions plummeted, and we saw proof that governments had the ability to tackle climate change, if not the willpower. Business as usual was halting and it looked like that business might include military operations. When the lockdowns began, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on governments and armed groups, “The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown... Put aside mistrust and animosity. Silence the guns; stop the artillery; end the airstrikes. End the sickness of war and fight the disease that is ravaging our world. That is what our human family needs, now more than ever.” But despite some rhetoric from groups such as Hezbollah, most militaries and armed groups act exempt from lockdown measures. Our partners in the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan continue to face the threat of regular cross-border bombing, only now it is exacerbated by fears of the virus and the impact on the lockdown on their food sources and access to medical care.

These fears are so different from the ones in Australia that had people panic-buying

toilet paper, hoarding flour, and fighting in supermarkets. In Kurdistan, the shops on our street remained fully stocked and people calmly chatted as they bought what they needed. I asked one of my Kurdish teammates about it, and he told me how his family had been part of the exodus to Iran when Saddam Hussein's army was fighting and killing the Kurdish people. Thousands of people died during that time from exposure and starvation. His family journeyed into the mountains with as much as they could carry, and no idea if they would survive. Another teammate told me once about the effect of the sanctions on Iraq, and how his family mixed sawdust with their flour to fill out their meals. Meanwhile in countries where roughly 1/3 of our food is wasted, the myth of scarcity has permeated western society. While people in Australia, Kurdistan and around the world go hungry, capitalism encourages supermarkets to bin perfectly good food and for all of us to hoard unnecessarily what is left. Growing numbers of people in Australia are living by themselves, not only increasing the amount of goods stored and consumed per capita but leading to the pervasive loneliness exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown.

The Kurdistan Regional Government was congratulated by the World Health Organization for how effectively they imposed the lockdown. In our seven hour trip to the airport in Erbil (usually three hours away) we drove through 12 checkpoints put in place to limit coronavirus transmission. In Australia, the government funded my compulsory quarantine in a hotel. These measures have worked, coronavirus cases are down and many people have done great things in this crisis but militaries—in most cases—remained exempt from lockdown measures. This exception has highlighted the sacred space the military occupies within decisions of governance, and the suffering that distinction causes for people like our partners in the mountains who continue to be bombed. ■

Photo: Claudio Schwarz, Unsplash

The United States increases its military budget every year while cutting funding on public health. Meanwhile, members of Black communities face a militarized police force that institutionally targets, profiles, incarcerates, and kills them. They also face a

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The Christian Peacemaker Team Family ■

Resources to stay safe and prepared when you protest:
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María and Ernesto

By Linda Knox



Miriam Maldonado, local volunteer and Betto Ramos, CAME director.

In February of this year, Ernesto and Maria* arrived at the CAME (Centro de Atención al Migrante Exodos) migrant shelter in Agua Prieta, Sonora. Fleeing extortion and threats of violence from the organized crime groups in southern Mexico's State of Guerrero, they hoped to present their asylum claim at the U.S. Port of Entry and to live with family members in Indiana while they awaited their asylum hearing.

In the past year, local volunteers, members of Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF), and CPT reserivists accompanied over 1000 asylum seekers in Agua Prieta from the shelter to the tent by the port of entry. People who made it to the tent waited from three days to three weeks for their turn to make their claim with U.S. Customs officials. Since unaccompanied migrants were in danger of kidnapping or extortion by the local cartel, CPT, PPF, and local companions walked with these families back and forth from the tent to the Migrant Resource Center three times a day for showers, bathroom breaks, food, and relaxation.

Then Covid-19 arrived; CPT and PPF closed their operations, and on March 21, the U.S. government used the health crisis as an excuse to stop accepting people with asylum claims.

Maria and Ernesto had made it to the tent just a few days earlier; and when the U.S. closed the border, they were the very next family in line to make their claim. The other two families waiting there have gone back to the CAME shelter, but Maria and Ernesto are still living in the tent. Now they have been there for over two months. Local volunteers still accompany them to the Migrant Resource Center. Besides the usual break time, they are helping clean in and outside of the building and to take care of the garden started by volunteers. They have harvested vegetables the CAME uses for salads.

Now they are not sure if they will continue living in the tent through the hot summer months. The U.S. has extended its border restrictions until late June, and there is no guarantee it will lift those restrictions at that time or any time in the near future. People all across the U.S./Mexican border are living in uncertain and dangerous conditions. Ernesto and Maria's situation is definitely uncertain, but, thanks to the many people, including CPT, who are accompanying migrants in Agua Prieta, their situation is not quite so dangerous. ■

**Names have been changed.*

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take action

Accompanying our partners looks different now. Even though we maintain frequent contact with them, we cannot physically visit them as we used to. Meanwhile, the lockdown has made them more vulnerable to violence and oppression they face daily.

Therefore, over the last three months, we have developed strategies to work with them through political advocacy and building the mass digital network of supporters. That's you. 🤝

cptaction.org is a place where you can take action for peace.

The Iraqi Kurdistan team launched a letter campaign, Hear Us Now: Stop the Bombing! In it, we demand that Turkey and Iran end all cross-border bombings. *Click here to sign the letter.*

cptaction.org is also a place to learn and interact with us. We host regular webinars where you can learn about our partners, our work, and how you can get involved. Our recent webinars include "Stories from the frontlines of the Wet'suwet'en Resistance," "Zionism and Palestine," and "Am I the only one stressed?"

By Marcela Cardenas
Images: Marcela Cardenas and Maria Adelaida



Colombia - the pandemic before the pandemic

Protests marked the last quarter of 2019 throughout several countries in South America. The discontentment took to the streets and promised not to return home until it was heard and attended to. Colombia was no exception. It shares the realities of the region; its people have a long list of demands and many reasons to raise their voices and take to the streets. Why did it take so long for Colombia to protest?

The truth is, in Colombia, the historical list of social issues is so great that it is impossible to simplify and unify a list of demands representing all disadvantaged sectors of society. For years they have demanded the state vindicate their rights, but it has been absent and provided few guarantees.

Protests, demonstrations, public vigils, pot-

clanging actions, curfew, and rising tension characterized the end of 2019. People brought their demands and filled the streets of the country, calling for a readjustment to the government's national agenda.

The actions of the people brought a breath of hope, bringing unity to the call for change in the country. These actions brought hope to those who have been making visible the dire inequalities in the country. They saw the Great National Strike as a spring of indignation.

The New Year was born in hope.

But unfortunately, 2020 had other plans for the world: COVID-19. The pandemic swept through the country, across urban and rural territories, infecting more than 30,000 people and causing more than 1,000 deaths. But those who know the tragic history of Colombia

remember there was a pandemic before COVID-19, with its own set of statistics.

Violence in Colombia is the old pandemic that spread through the streets of big cities and small towns. Through the desert and jungle. It infected the impoverished and those abandoned by the government. It left behind eight million victims.

Represented among these eight million are forced displacement and disappearances, homicides, torture, kidnappings, rape, silenced lives, destroyed families, a battered social fabric, and a shattered society. The problem with figures is that they only register a number; they do not speak of lives, of pain, of sadness. They represent everything, but they do not speak of anyone.

COVID-19 did not bring new violence to Colombia. Instead, it has intensified the already existing reality. The virus has confirmed that violence is not only hidden, but it impacts women in varied ways. The number of domestic violence cases since the quarantine began, has doubled compared to last year. The murders of 70 women have been classified as femicides, calling into question the mantra, “staying home saves lives.” Another record of death in Colombia registers more than 114 social leaders assassinated in 2020. And 25 former FARC

combatants, signatories of the 2016 peace agreement, have been victims of targeted killings in 2020 alone.

The first pandemic—that of state violence—normalized corruption and gendered violence. It is a part of the daily routine. COVID-19, the second pandemic, became an exclusive priority; it replaced the demands of the people from the Great National Strike. The demands for social change became invisible.

The deaths caused by the second pandemic do not have a lower value; that is a belief of those who think that some deaths hurt more than others. First-class deaths and second-class deaths do not exist. Any death is painful. Any preventable death caused by violence, neglect, corruption, or government abandonment hurts, and matters.

But in Colombia, focusing on the figures has made this country not feel grief when it comes to the death of 10, 100, 1000, or 10,000. Mothers who have lost sons and daughters to both these pandemics know the difference between each number. Their pain does not distinguish between categories; they feel each one. Therefore, the country should grieve as the mother of all who died, of all the disappeared. The world should speak more of lives, of struggles and legacies, rather than of numbers that do not commemorate anyone nor humanize barbarity.

When those of us who defend human rights speak, we do so from pain. We speak while holding a photograph of a missing person, or when we light a candle or call out in remembrance. We resist alongside those who



have given everything, even their lives, even when all their land is stolen. But we also speak from hope, because we hope these stories end and that the storm stops, and the calm we do not know comes. We hope for the peace that is spoken of in books and studied by scholars. It is a peace that has to do more with social justice, one that guarantees the essential minimum without exception, gives access to dignified healthcare and education, and the right to live a life free of violence.

We cannot allow the virus to hide the pandemic before the pandemic. The government cannot use COVID-19 to evade its responsibilities. Its collaborators: corrupt politicians, armed actors, and war profiteers, need to be held accountable. Next time, we will be out on the streets sooner. ■

Announcements

CPT's Peacemaker Corps training postponed indefinitely

Due to the uncertainties associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, Christian Peacemaker Teams has **postponed indefinitely** the Peacemaker Corps Training originally scheduled to take place from 12 November – 11 December 2020.

We will continue to assess conditions worldwide in order to determine when we can hold the training in a way that maximizes safety for everyone (local hosts, partners, teams, training participants and trainers) and inclusion of all candidates coming from many places around the globe. We will announce new training dates and application deadlines as soon as we can meet our safety and inclusion criteria.

We recognize that cancelling many CPT Delegations during the pandemic creates a challenge for fulfilling this training prerequisite. Improved conditions that allow Delegations to resume will be an indicator for scheduling a future Peacemaker Corps Training.

In the meantime, there are many ways to stay engaged and support the work of CPT. Visit cptaction.org to find informative webinars and important action campaigns. The Palestine program will continue welcoming Interns whenever their work on the ground resumes. Please send your internship application to **Program Support Coordinator Mona el-Zuhairi** at monazuhairi@cpt.org.

CPT receives applications for membership in the Peacemaker Corps year round. Visit our website to find out more about becoming a CPTer.

Delegations 2020

All delegations excluding the following have been cancelled.

Palestine/Israel: October 17 - 31
Palestine/Israel: December 1 - 15

Questions? Write to us at delegations@cpt.org



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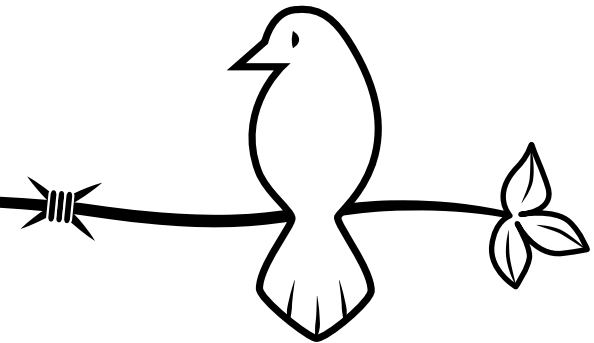
Hear Us Now: Stop the Bombing

Sign this open letter to the Kurdistan
Regional Government demanding they take
action to stop all cross border bombings
and respond to the needs of those affected.

Share it on social media
#HearUsNowStopTheBombing

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