

I'd like to wish everyone a very happy 2018. May there be peace in 2018. You know, the gospel message is not one of dogmas. It never has been. It's about peace on earth, goodwill to everyone. It's about compassion. Courage. Endurance. Joy. Love. And so often we miss the point and get into fights about dogmas we do not understand; dogmas that no one understands. This has been the reason for so many wars. We're right, and all those evil people are wrong. We're just missing the point.

So what do we do about resolutions? Well, that's a waste of time for many people, but I think the greatest one in view of the situation we're in now is the work, the amazing work, of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. It's refusing to pay for war. If you work for peace, stop paying for war!

The National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee supports individuals who refuse to pay for war, and promotes war tax resistance in the context of a broad range of nonviolent strategies for social change. Through the redirection of our tax dollars, war tax resisters contribute directly to the struggle for peace and justice for all.

NWTRCC is a coalition of local, regional, and national groups and individuals from across the United States. For everyone interested in or actively refusing to pay taxes for war, NWTRCC offers information, referral, support, resources, publicity, campaign sponsorship, and connection to an international network of conscientious objectors to war taxes.

This is extremely important. No tax dollars for the war in Yemen. Keep resistance alive in 2018. This is a real resolution, and I do hope you'll be in touch with them. What kind of people are connected with this? Well, you have the Episcopel Peace Fellowship, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, Nonviolence International, Sojourners, Voices for Creative Nonviolence (Kathy Kelly's group). That's about as good as it gets. That's a resolution, and I'm sure there are many others - but this is a time when war tax resistance is essential. I really don't care to pay for starving children in Yemen. I really don't care to have cluster bombs falling. I really don't care to have us refueling Saudi aircraft that are bombing a helpless people. I don't want one cent to go to any of that. It's disgusting. Here we as tax slaves are heavily taxed, and going to be more heavily taxed. What say do we have in how that money is used? None. Taxation without representation is the tyranny in which we live.

There are so many wonderful groups. This is just one of hundreds of organizations that are remaking our society. And they're doing a great job of building. If you work for peace, stop paying for war. Think about it.

It would be impossible to mention all the groups. People sometimes say why isn't there just one group. No, no no. Just like St Paul. Most of the reasoning and metaphors in the peace movement are military and sporting. He was not interested in military action, but he often used military metaphors. What is the military metaphor for popular resistance? If you are guerillas of peace, you know that if you have multiple organizations you have to stamp out each one individually because they are *autonomous*. There's no central command, as in some very ill military force that includes generals who are out of their minds completely. But there is a centralization of the idea around which so many are organizing now. These are the comments of one of these hundreds and hundreds of groups that we are so proud of. Popular resistance.

It's so hard to keep up with everything. The media is really disgraceful. You would think that there are no five places being bombed right now. You hear chit chat about what's going on in the beltway. Some of it may be possibly if I think well he said this she said that - chatter going no where. The people who are really concerned are in the resistance. They're quite clear. This is from Kevin Zeese, writing for CounterPunch:

The year 2017 has been another active year for people fighting on a wide range of fronts. The Trump administration has brought many issues that have existed for years out into the open where they are more difficult to deny – racism, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy and the crises they create. More people are activated and greater connections between the fronts of struggle are creating a movement of movements. These are positive developments, bright spots in difficult times. They are the seeds of transformative change that we can nurture and grow if we act with intention.

The crises we face have been building for decades. They are reaching a point of extremism that will create an even greater response by people. What that response is, where it goes and what it accomplishes are up to all of us to determine.

The overreach by the plutocrats in power may bring a boomerang effect, energizing the population to take action and demand the changes we desire and need. We may reach a moment, a turning point, when the movements for economic, racial and environmental justice, as well as peace, can win significant changes, beyond the comfort zones of those in power. The boomerang will only occur if we educate and organize for it, and its size will also depend on us.

We have no illusions that this work will be easy. Those in power will do all that they can to derail, misdirect and suppress our efforts. Our tasks are to resist their tactics and maintain our focus on our end goals. This requires understanding how

social movements succeed and being clear in our demands for transformative change.

We see several key areas where people are energized to work for changes that are opportunities to expand the current movement of movements into a powerful force that will overcome the stranglehold by the corporate duopoly parties. This is the first of two articles to help prepare us for the work ahead. In the second article, we will describe these key issues in greater depth and what we need to do to create the transformative moment we need.

The era of transformation has been developing over many decades. If we view it through presidential administrations, a frame of reference used commonly in the United States, we see that both major parties represent the interests of the wealthy and corporations, not the majority of the population, and that they effectively divide and weaken popular movements.

After Bill Clinton's administration loosened regulations on finance, setting the stage for the 2008 crash, brought in trade agreements like NAFTA and weakened the social safety net, and George W. Bush's administration expanded military aggression around the world and the domestic security state, as well as further enriching the wealthy, people were hungry for change. Barack Obama effectively built his 'hope and change' campaign around this desire, vaguely but eloquently promising what people wanted. His words allowed people to imagine that a transformation was coming.

Obama raised expectations, but he did not fulfill them. His cabinet was made up of Wall Streeters from Citigroup. He continued and expanded foreign wars, the wealth divide grew and tens of millions went without healthcare even after his private insurance-based Affordable Care Act became law. The frustration that had been building during the Clinton-Bush years burst onto the scene with Occupy, Fight for \$15, Black Lives Matter, debt resistance, immigration reform, Idle No More and other fronts of struggle.

After Occupy, the media told us the people's struggle went away, but, as we show in the daily movement news reporting on Popular Resistance, all of those struggles expanded. The corporate media's failure to cover the national mass protest movement does not change reality — the resistance movements continue, are growing and are impacting popular opinion and policies.

During this phase, the contradictions in the system become more obvious to people. For example, as the United States and world experience the harsh realities of climate change in massive storms, widespread fires, droughts and

famine, the government's response is inadequate. When Obama was president his administration was an anchor on the world, weakening international climate and trade agreements. His secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, used her influence to promote fracking. The Trump administration has gone further, denying climate change, erasing words and phrases that describe it from government reports, silencing scientists and undermining the inadequate steps made to confront climate change that were put in place in the Obama era.

The inadequate response to the climate crisis is one example of many multiple crisis situations that exist in which the government does not respond, responds inadequately or even takes actions that make these crises worse. In some cases, the power holders go too far, as we see in the recently passed tax bill, designed to protect the donor class, and in abusive police practices as the racism and violence of our society are exposed. The overreaction, in the end helps build the national consensus we need to achieve our objectives.

The contradictions arise because there are obvious solutions to each crisis we face, but those in power refuse to put them in place. National consensus for these solutions grows during this phase, and the failures of the money-dominated political system become more obvious.

As a result, a transformative moment is building now. It can be seen in the 2016 presidential campaigns where people showed frustration with both corporate parties. Electoral challenges inside the parties showed populist anger based on hundreds of millions of people struggling every day to survive in an unfair economy. Donald Trump built his campaign around economic insecurity from the right and Senator Bernie Sanders did the same from the left. Now, Trump is betraying conservative populists with economic and healthcare policies that add to their insecurity and with the wealthiest cabinet in US history, serving the interests of Wall Street, the self-interest of elected officials and adding to the distrust of the DC duopoly. The realization of Trump's betrayal is only beginning to show itself in the lives of those who supported him.

The Democrats have been struggling to come to grips with how they lost to Donald Trump. A large part of the party is in denial, blaming their failures on the fiction of Russiagate — claiming the Russians were responsible for their loss rather than a widely-disliked candidate who represented Wall Street and war for her entire career. The Democrats continue their internal divide: the divide between Wall Street donors who want the party to serve their interests and voters who want the party to represent their interests. Invariably the Democrats will be

unable to turn their backs on their donors and will nominate a fake change agent who will spout popular progressive rhetoric and dash those hopes when in office.

It is critical for us to step out of the limitations of two and four year election cycles and recognize that social transformation does not arise by electing the perceived least evil. Social transformation occurs through a people-powered movement of movements that arises over decades of struggle and shifts the political reality so that the power holders must respond.

There will be a backlash. It will look to the Democrats like a backlash against Trump's extremism, but it will be broader. It will be a backlash against the extremism of the corporate duopoly. Their bi-partisan policies always put the wealthy and big business interests first. The boomerang will be built on the conflict between the necessities of the people and the planet vs. the greed of the wealthy.

There are a number of fundamental issues that are priorities for large majorities of the population, around which people are mobilizing and where national consensus is developing. They have the potential to connect our movements into a powerful force.

One of our tasks is to develop clear demands so that we cannot be side-tracked by false or partial solutions. If these fundamental issues are addressed through bold and transformative solutions, they will shift the political culture and our political system in a significant way towards the people-powered future we need. They will create change at the root causes of the crises we face.

These transformative issues include economic inequality, lack of access to health care, ensuring Internet freedom and a people's media, confronting climate change and environmental disasters, ending US Empire and militarism at home, and addressing domestic human rights abuses, whether it is exploitation of workers, mass incarceration, racism or disrespect for Indigenous sovereignty.

Throughout all of these issues there is a thread of racial injustice so our struggles must not just solidify around class issues, but must also solidify around the necessity of ending systemic racism.

We wish all of you a peaceful week and hope you are able to spend time with loved ones. We are committed to being with you through the struggle and to doing all we can to stop the machine and create a new world.

Another world is possible. Another world is coming. Another world is reality. We are so grateful for the work of those like Kevin Zeese and Dr. Margaret Flowers for giving us these important thoughts as we enter the new year. They are with the Popular Resistance Movement, which you can find online.

Friends, we recently found that about a quarter of a million dollars is paid for the incarceration of a child in California. That money is spent on abuse, on rape, on mean-spirited punishment, and with that amount of money, the finest schooling in the world would be possible, and the finest care. People are getting rich on our incarcerated children. They are getting rich on our incarcerated adults. People are getting rich on our young people getting killed in unnecessary, illegal, foul wars of conquest.

We have so much to be grateful for - and at the same time, we have to deal with the daily sadism of our government. The Department of Homeland Security is again involved in John Kelly's proposal that children be separated from their parents. I can't imagine a more ghoulish thing. Who in the devil told anyone that was a good idea! Break up the family. We punish everyone in the family by separating children from their parents. A terrifying prospect for any child or parent. They're breaking up the family supposedly to deter a surge in entries by asylum seekers. Well, isn't that wonderful! Our immigrants have made this country. I'm from an immigrant family. The idea of breaking up a family in the name of some stupid law is diabolical, foolish and ghoulish.

Now we have conservative institutions - the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, after years of study, have concluded what should have been self-evident. They investigated the affect of US military aid and troop deployments on so-called anti-American terrorism, using an example of 106 countries between 1986 and 2011 - and found that great military commitments leads to more anti-American terrorism. Well, what a surprise. People fight back! What did you expect? For them to thank us for breaking into their homes, destroying their families, bombing their cities? Of course no one would get mad about that, now would they? Thank you Hoover Institution at Stanford for finally waking up. We're creating terrorism, quite simply. And this should be - to quote the founding fathers - "self-evident."

When we hear the ridiculous phrase *support our troops* all the time. The implication in the phrase is that our troops decided to go over and fight. They did not. They were told as you might tell a slave where to go. It's not subject to their will. They are forced to go. They are not in a position to choose.

So let's take a look at history for the sake of ending this damned thing which is made up of rape, murder, torture, lies, this thing called war. It was 103 years ago this Christmas that something happened near the beginning of the "war to end all wars" that give us a blip of hope in the historical timeline of organized mass slaughter, which is war. This is from Dr. Gary Kohls, writing for Global Research:

The event was regarded by the professional military officer class to be so profound and so important (and so disturbing) that strategies were immediately put in place that would ensure that such an event could never happen again.

“Christian” Europe was in the fifth month of the war of 1914 – 1918, the so-called Great War that finally ground to a mutually suicidal halt after four years of exhausting trench warfare, with all of the original participants financially, spiritually and morally bankrupt.

British, Scottish, French, Belgian, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, German, Austrian, Hungarian, Serbian and Russian clergymen from church pulpits in those Christian nations were doing their part in creating a decidedly un-Christ-like patriotic fervor that would result in a holocaust that destroyed four empires, killed upwards of 20 million soldiers and civilians, physically wounded hundreds of millions more and caused the psychological and spiritual decimation of an entire generation of young men whose spiritual care was supposed to be the responsibility of those clergymen.

Christianity, it should be remembered, began as a highly ethical pacifist religion based on the teachings and actions of the nonviolent Jesus of Nazareth (and his pacifist apostles and followers). Christianity survived and thrived despite persecutions until it became the largest religion in the Roman Empire by the time **Constantine the Great** became emperor (in 313 CE) and usurped the religion's leaders into becoming OK with the homicidal violence of warfare. Ever since then, the nations that professed Christianity as their state religion have never allowed the mainline churches to truly exercise the radical peacemaking of the original form of Christianity as Jesus had taught.

So, contrary to the ethical teachings of Jesus, most modern Christian churches have refused to become active resisters to its particular nation's militarist or imperial aspirations, its nation's aggressive wars, its nation's war-makers or its nation's war profiteers. Instead, the church has, by and large, become a bloody instrument of the satanic in support of whatever sociopathic warmongers and sociopathic corporations are in power.

So, it shouldn't come as much of a surprise to see that the religious leaders on both sides of World War I were convinced that God was on their particular side and therefore not on the side of those professed followers of Jesus that had been fingered as enemies by their nation's political leaders. **The incongruity of believing that the same god was blessing the lethal weapons and protecting the doomed sons on both sides of No-Man's Land) failed to register with the vast majority of combatants and their spiritual counselors.**

So, early in the war, pulpits and pews all over Europe reverberated with flag-waving fervor, sending clear messages to the millions of doomed warrior-sons that it was their Christian duty to march off to kill the equally doomed Christian soldiers on the other side of the line. And for the civilians back home, it was their Christian duty to "support the troops" who were destined to return home dead or wounded, psychologically and spiritually broken, disillusioned – and faithless.

A mere five months into this frustrating war (featuring trench warfare, artillery barrages, withering machine gun fire, and, soon to come, unstoppable armored tanks, aerial bombardment and poison gas), the first Christmas of the war on the Western Front offered a respite to the exhausted, freezing and demoralized troops.

Christmas was the holiest of Christian holidays and every soldier in the frozen trenches was slowly coming to the abrupt realization that war was NOT glorious (as they had been led to believe). After experiencing death, dying, hunger, frostbite, sleep deprivation, shell shock, traumatic brain injuries and homesickness, the traditional spirit of Christmas and its expectations of peace and love, had a special meaning for the troops.

Christmas reminded the soldiers of the good food, warm homes and beloved families and friends that they had left behind and which – they now suspected – they might never see again. The soldiers in the trenches desperately sought some respite from the misery of the rat, lice and corpse-infested trenches.

Some of the more thoughtful troops had begun to suspect that even if they survived the war physically, they might not survive it psychically or spiritually.

In the excitement leading up to the war, the frontline soldiers on either side had been convinced that God was on their particular side, that their nation was predestined to be victorious and that they would be “home before Christmas” where they would be celebrated as conquering heroes.

Instead, each frontline soldier found himself at the end of his emotional rope because of the unrelenting artillery barrages against which they were defenseless. If they weren’t killed or physically maimed by the artillery shells and bombs, they would eventually be emotionally destroyed by “shell-shock” (now known as combat-induced posttraumatic stress disorder – PTSD).

The soldier-victims that witnessed a multitude of examples of battlefield cruelty logically suffered various depths of depression, anxiety, suicidality, hyper-alertness, horrifying nightmares and flashbacks (which was usually misdiagnosed as a “hallucination of unknown cause”, a reality that would condemn millions of future soldiers to be mistakenly diagnosed with schizophrenia and thus mistakenly treated with addictive, brain-altering psych drugs).

Many World War I soldiers suffered any number of traumatic mental and/or neurological abnormalities, including traumatic brain injury (TBI), which only became a diagnosable affliction several wars later.

Among the other common war-induced “killers of the soul” were the starvation, the malnutrition, the dehydration, the infections (such as typhus and dysentery), the louse infestations, the trench foot, the frostbite and the gangrenous toes and fingers. If any of the tormented survivors got back home in one piece, they would not really appreciate being treated as military heroes in memorial day parades staged in their honor. They knew – if they were being totally honest with themselves – that they were not actual heroes, but rather they were victims of a sick, delusional, greedy, militarized culture that glorified war and killing and then abandoned the deceived, wounded survivors that made it home alive. Standard operating procedure in every war.

Poison gas attacks from both sides, albeit begun by the scientifically-superior Germans, began early in 1915, and Allied tank warfare – which was a

humiliating disaster for the British innovators of that new technology – wouldn't be operational until the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

One of the most stressful and lethal realities for the frontline soldiers was the suicidal, misbegotten, “over the top” infantry assaults against the opposition's machine gun nests. Such assaults were complicated by the presence of shell holes and the rows of coiled barbed wire that often made them sitting ducks. Artillery barrages from both sides commonly resulted in tens of thousands of casualties in a single day.

The “over the top” infantry assaults sacrificed hundreds of thousands of obedient lower-echelon soldiers in the futile efforts to gain ground. Those assaults were stupidly and repeatedly ordered by senior officers such as Sir John French and his replacement as British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig. Most of the old-timer generals who had fought wars in the previous century refused to admit that their outdated “horse and sabre” cavalry charges across the muck of No-Man's Land were both hopeless and suicidal.

The general staff planners of the various disastrous attempts to end the war quickly (or at least end the stalemate) were safely out of the range of enemy artillery barrages. The national war-planners were safely back in Parliament or hiding in their castles, and their aristocratic generals were comfortably billeted in warm and dry headquarters far from the hot war, eating well, being dressed by their orderlies, drinking their tea and claret – none of them at any risk of suffering the lethal consequences of war.

Screams of pain often came from the wounded soldiers who were helplessly hanging on the barbed wire or trapped and perhaps bleeding to death in the bomb craters between the trenches. Often the dying of the wounded would linger for days, and the effect on the troops in the trenches, who had to listen to the desperate, unanswerable cries for help was always psychologically distressing. By the time Christmas came and winter hit, troop morale on both sides of No Man's Land had hit rock bottom.

So on December 24, 1914, the exhausted troops settled down to their meager Christmas meal with, for the lucky ones, gifts from home, special food, special liquor, special chocolate bars and the hope for peace, if even for one night.

On the German side, a magnanimous (and deluded) **Kaiser Wilhelm** sent 100,000 Christmas trees with millions of ornamental candles to the front, expecting that such an act would boost German troop morale. Using the precious supply lines for such militarily unnecessary items was ridiculed by the most of the hardened officers, and nobody suspected that the Kaiser's Christmas tree idea would backfire – instead becoming a catalyst for an unplanned-for and unauthorized cease-fire, orchestrated by non-officers and unheard of in the history of warfare. The mutiny was censored out of mainstream history books for most of the next century.

The Christmas Truce of 1914 was a spontaneous, unauthorized event that happened at a number of locations all along the 600 miles of triple trenches that stretched across Belgium and France, and it was an event that would never again be duplicated, thanks to the war-profiteers, professional militarists and saber-rattling wannabes in the media, parliament and Congress who glory in their nation's "pseudo-patriotic" wars.

Friends, there is a wonderful song about the Christmas Truce of 1914 that brings that moment of hope into sharp relief. The power of the music and the lyrics is beneficial to everyone. Thank you all for being with us today on World Focus.