



This Buddha survived Tsunamis in 1334, 1369, and 1498.

## THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

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From time to time in these pieces you will find links to websites. You can of course copy laboriously by hand from the text on the page. If copy and paste is more your style, you can find “hot” links on my [peacemakerpress.com](http://peacemakerpress.com) website.

### **Humo(u)r: Every Court Needs a Jester**

The Revocation of US Independence: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/revocation.asp>  
(Not actually written by John Cleese, though often attributed to him.) It first appeared after the 2000 recount fiasco and the election of George W. Bush.

My favorite satirical commentators in the USA, immigrants all Samantha Bee – Full Frontal

John Oliver – Last Week Tonight

Trevor Noah -- The Daily Show

Each has shows that are available on-line, at least to some degree.

Obama is another fine American humorist. His last 2016 event is <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=hA5ezR0Kh8>

# THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Work on these pieces began months ago, months before the US Presidential election, shortly before the UK Brexit vote. At the time, I was merely fussing about the anti-internationalism of the pro-Brexit campaign, little imagining that it would win. Of course it did, stunning the pollsters who predicted the opposite. By then Trump was already the Republicans' chosen nominee and we were having conversations all summer long and into the autumn about whether the US could possibly be about to stun us the same way. Generally I felt reassuring and, when the "October surprise" turned out to be a horrific Donald Trump audio tape about his propensity for sexual assault, I imagined that things were swinging decisively in the direction we internationalists hoped. But of course there was a "late October surprise" as well, when the Director of the FBI pounced on "new" emails.

2016 US election results actually resemble the results of 2000 Bush v. Gore. Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, but not by enough to overcome the inequalities purposely built by the Founders into the US electoral system. Originally designed so that no "majority" would ever have the power to overthrow slavery by legislative means, in these times it is low population, rural states, which tend conservative, that have disproportionate electoral power. So, for the second time in 20 years, the majority vote and Presidential winner have not echoed each other. An inescapable reality for the next four years.

Even worse for us all, the majority popular vote also failed to prevent a Democratic minority in House and Senate, because of gerrymandered districts in the House and because of that same Constitutional arrangement guaranteeing low population states excess electoral power: 600,000 voters in staunchly Republican Wyoming have the same number of Senators as nearly 40 million Californians. What's more the Constitutional defense of slavery was so sturdy that no small state can ever be stripped of its second senator without its consent (Article V). Not even liberal Vermont, the smallest of them all and home to Bernie Saunders is going to press for genuine electoral equality in this country.

Nonetheless, immersed as we are in all of this Federal vote counting, it is important to remember how powerful individual States are in the US political system. States' rights, for ill and for good, strictly limit the power of the national government. Often that looks from the outside as though the US is doing "nothing" about big problems like climate change when, in fact, the interesting work is being done at the State level. Among the web-links you might want to check out is an encouraging response to the Federal election from California's legislative leaders: <http://sd24.senate.ca.gov/news/2016-11-09-joint-statement-california-legislative-leaders-result-presidential-election>.

The world which is now turning upside down is the world I grew up in and lived in. Not an eternal world. Not an eternal truth. That world is now ending. It was a world whose governance, economic systems, relations among peoples and nations, and knowledge base were designed in reaction against World War II, and as a response to the decolonization struggle then ending the European imperialist era of globalization. Those were really different times and 1945 was not the first remaking of the world. Remember Galileo.

The second essay weaves US political realities into the musical HAMILTON with its stories/realities of the founding of the USA as a political entity. The third takes up deeper issues with electoral consequences. First let's turn to the international world. Given my predominant professional interests that priority is hardly surprising.

## NONE OF US IS ALONE

The original impetus for writing this section was simply to clarify the degree to which the international “consensus” that followed World War II, with its consequent patterns of global trade, communication and finance, is now actively facing challenges all over the world and, what is more, its challengers are using the very procedures of democracy, elections and legislative action which may also now be newly at risk.

Globalization is the label people routinely applied to what began as a post WWII consensus in favor of internationally designed and managed agreements – with the exception of course of the giant divisions of the Cold War. In this election in the USA, globalization’s opponents have singled out trade treaties and immigration as their bitterest enemies. In the 1970s, a previous cousin of US dismay at globalization singled out the United Nations and, of all things the desire to create “World Heritage Sites” honoring the natural beauty in the American west. Loss of sovereignty was the cry even all those years ago. Sovereignty was also the aspiration British Brexiters used in 2016. Anxieties among progressives in the USA, that global-scale corporate sovereignty might actually superseding popular sovereignty, spurred Bernie’s supporters to oppose the TPP treaty, just as conservatives deplored the export of jobs to China. In 2008, global finance having caused a global economic catastrophe, with ordinary people still paying the price while the bankers go on about their merry way, ensures that internationalism is no longer highly regarded in the USA. Into this state of affairs, global communications systems have played an unusually large role in local politics, because Rupert Murdoch controlled so many trains of thought.

Nonetheless it is genuinely local patterns of economic and political reality around the world that are prompting challenges to the global internationalist consensus. As a result power is changing hands, or nearly changing or not changing hands as fast as it should and each time the anti-internationalist stance has had powerful popular support.

Check out 6 months’ worth of examples. More could be added even to this list for this short period.

**May 23, the Austrian** elections bureau finally declared that a mere few thousand votes had cost Norbert Hofer victory in the Presidential campaign. Hofer is as explicitly a politician in the tradition of Hitler as is now possible to be, sporting the Blue Cornflower, a symbol of the Nazis in the 1930s and committed to advocacy for a united “German cultural community” under the slogan “Honour, Freedom, Fatherland.”

**June 27, the United Kingdom** demonstrated conclusively that it was disunited, Scotland and the North of Ireland voting to stay in the EU, England and Wales voting for Brexit. In the aftermath, the Labour party leadership in Parliament imploded while Johnson, Farage and Cameron, the three men who had forced the referendum, declared themselves unwilling to lead after all. Theresa May, a woman in the Margaret Thatcher tradition, agreed lead both factions, pro and anti Brexit, out of a political crisis manufactured by a bunch of men who held a referendum to avoid the underlying challenge: globalization & modernization leave the UK with massive problems of inter-regional inequality.

**June 30, the Philippines** inaugurated a new President, Duterte, widely compared to Donald Trump for his wild talk and rough ways. The full nature of his tenure is hard for someone as distant as I from the politics of that country to judge but it is now clear he is an active supporter of vigilante justice and thousands have been murdered since he took office, all in the name of cleaning up drugs. His international agenda is pivoting away from the USA and towards China,

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realigning conflicts that were already dangerously militarized, over control of globalization's shipping lanes through SE Asia.

**On July 9, in Japan**, after decades of arduous, careful and off-again on-again campaigning, Prime Minister Abe's political coalition won a 2/3 majority in Upper House elections. This gives him the

votes he needs to change Article 9. Article 9 is the Constitutional clause, adopted after World War II, which commits Japan never again to use military force overseas. Oh this clause was not mentioned during a campaign conducted largely on economic terms, but it was lurking. Japan, like the UK currently has only a minimal opposition party, the Japan Democratic Party having been crippled by taking power for the first time in 45 years just before Japan was shattered by the 2011 Tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear meltdown.

**On July 12, the International Court of Arbitration** ruled decisively against China's economic and military claims for the SE Asian islands which are the center of military operations and international challenges involving China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia and the USA. The Chinese government immediately repudiated the ruling as meaningless, because to them no international court can have standing to rule on a regional issue. The Taiwanese government, generally opposed to Chinese dominance but mindful, as Chinese, of their own claims on that region, rushed in to agree.

**July 15, the military in Turkey** attempted a coup d'état in Istanbul, hoping to overthrow Erdogan's increasingly theocratic and autocratic, although democratically elected government. The coup was blocked, in part by citizen resistance. Turkey by tradition dating back to 1923 had military governments that were secular. The costs to Turkey in lost tourism revenue from the coup and instability will rise, a process already intense because the refugee influx from Syria has changed the country. The onset of Turkish nationalism must at least in part be laid at the feet of Germany and the other European nations who have long been standing in the way of Turkey's joining the EU, thereby denying Erdogan a centerpiece of his original electoral agenda.

**Oct. 2, The citizens of Colombia** voted by the smallest of margins to reject a peace agreement intended to end their civil war because, in the eyes of its opponents it did not punish the rebels enough.

**Oct. 27, The Chinese Communist Party** awarded the status "Core Leader" to Xi Jinping, the first leader since Mao and Deng to have such a high sounding title. Xi has also held off identifying who might succeed him when his next five-year term ends. Both events raise doubts about whether Xi will adhere to the CCP's recent rhythms that transfer power every 10 years.

## Patterns

(1) Erdogan of Turkey and Vladimir Putin are governing using skillful means to stay in power for well over a decade while abiding within the official constraints of the national electoral protocols which regulate the transfer of power in their countries. Shinzo Abe is operating similarly, and it now looks as though Xi Jinping of China may well join the group. Routine transfers of governing power can no longer be assumed.

(2) Rough justice, of which Duterte is the most horrifying exponent clearly has popular appeal. His propensity for murder was well understood when he was elected. Donald Trump's disdain for well established constitutional precedent evident in his receptiveness to torture as a military strategy and in his anti-Muslim policies were key to his electoral appeal. Xi Jinping's government carries out extra-territorial kidnappings of political opponents and repudiates the International

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Court of Justice rulings while managing to portray these things in domestic policy as a defense of stability and sovereignty.

(3) Governments everywhere, even the sainted Obama government, have used the existence of “terrorists,” who undoubtedly do exist, to bolster domestic policies that curtail their own citizens’ civil liberties.

## Prospects

I have no idea what’s ahead. I learned by studying war and peacemaking that chaos, in the sense of “indeterminacy” really does all too often explain the course of events in international relations. Still, I do know a little about where to look in the weeks and months ahead to see how and whether these patterns replicate.

**South Korea** — the right wing Park presidency is embroiled in a scandal about whether she is too much under the influence of a shaman. Yes, really. And Park is the daughter of an earlier dictator.

**Italy** — they have a referendum Dec. 4 about whether to give their democracy a sturdier structure. Italians, remember have suffered and also survived two different iterations of a Berlusconi (i.e. Trump-style) government. By the time most readers will get this piece, the referendum will have occurred.

**France** — Marine Le Pen, also a daughter, is running for President. Her father was among the first in western Europe to make proto-fascist political positions reputable enough to gain votes. She may win: April/May 2017.

**Germany** — Angela Merkel’s current term as Chancellor ends sometime between August and October. 2017. Germany i nation can come out of actual fascism and be remade.

**Canada** — Americans often look to Canada for hope. After all they have single payer health insurance. But Canada also has Tar sands oil — a true ecological disaster — and an equally dreadful history of indigenous relations. Furthermore all through our Obama years they were suffering Stephen Harper and staring enviously south. They now have another Trudeau. Talk about dynasties.

## Hopes

Though I cannot predict I value being able to hope. The results of elections this year convince me that we should try to ensure (1) That we challenge all tendencies towards leadership dynasties, whether familial ones — Clintons, Bushes, Le Pens, Parks, Trudeaus etc. — or the enduring self re-elections of Putin and Erdogan and probably Xi Jinping. We need vigorously to protect and hope to see others protect that fundamental part of political life, the transfer of power. In the USA George Washington, by stepping down in 1797, began the voluntary tradition of transferring power from time to time. It is critical to a viable democratic and to hopes for a better future in every day life. (2) That if we are to build a hopeful, inclusive future we need to look beyond old style internationalists. That means, in the USA, looking towards the West and Southwest, towards women and towards newcomers with a personal as opposed to a largely institutional basis for their internationalism. (3) HOWEVER, as you will see in the third essay in this cluster, I also believe we should be deeply wary of that part of the Techno West which is trying to do away with human skill and work, replacing humans with robots at our jobs, in our cars and even managing our houses. Election results across the world are vivid indicators of the price too many have already had to pay for production systems that are careless about individuals' rights to work for their livelihoods.

# IN REAL LIFE THERE ARE NO INTERMISSIONS

In the musical HAMILTON, a quiet, solemn song “The World Turns Upside Down” marks the triumphant rebel victory at Yorktown. Thanks to a daughter in theater in New York, I am one of the lucky ones who saw the show before it took off for the stratosphere. The idea that we NEED a turning has been on my agenda much longer. A GREAT TURNING, a global scale transformation of the industrial growth economies of this era, is a mantra that came to us from a close friend and mentor, Joanna Macy. Her phrase has been, both for Rob's sustainability endeavors and my peace-making projects, a key impetus guiding our professional and personal work.

I spent my time in the HAMILTON audience getting an education in US history, as well as soaking up inspiring evidence that this country really is a spectacularly wonderful, if also a difficult place to live. That audience experience is the source of this section's analysis-by-analogy, using HAMILTON's plot lines and words to shine a spotlight on 2016, on the political situation we find ourselves in right now. In the musical history lesson, as in most American school history textbooks, as the battle of Yorktown ends (1781), defeated Red Coats march off the field and their song echoes back: **The World Turned Upside-down** — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpsuEckW8ZE> (start at 2.30 for this particular phrase)

If the world is indeed turning upside down, judging by the theater the prospect is incredibly exciting. Audiences cheer, day after day and they have done so for over a year and a half. The world turning upside down is thrilling. Thrilling because “Immigrants, we get the job done.” Thrilling because “just like my country, young scrappy and hungry” the people creating the new USA back then found the politics of the time strong and energetic, even if confusing and contested. And many participated eagerly, almost greedily in the process. This 2016 election season has also mobilized a lot of people, including many new people. At the same time millions stayed home this year and refused even to vote, as thousands must have during the Revolutionary war, hating the process, wishing it would stop.

Nation-making back then was brilliant and engaging, and yet the Founders left heavy legacies for us, including slavery, factionalism, struggles across state lines and among immigrant communities, and an electoral system too easily captured by small minded, large egos, legacies that endure to this day. One of the miracles of HAMILTON the musical is that, while the compromises are clearly visible, even sometimes clearly crippling, one leaves the theater certain that we are in the midst of another opportunity to weaken the grip of these legacies, that today's threats in our vaunted land of opportunity do not doom us.

At least since the 1990s and the Contract with America, this country has been enmeshed once again in a particularly intense phase of our ongoing struggle over the Founders' legacies. We are not done countering the suffering of Africans brought here in chains, the iniquity of dispossessing Indians of their land and centuries of immigration from all parts of the globe, which together continue to defy easy integration into a coherent social system. From the Founding, through the Civil War, under the Asian Exclusion Acts and endless union-busting through Nixon's Southern Strategy, powerful forces and huge energies have been committed to preserving ideals, competing economic systems and distributions of power that sustained the nation when it was slave as well as free. Repeatedly, slightly but genuinely stronger energies have committed themselves to redeeming ourselves from that creation.

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HAMILTON the play, both the first and the second act, take us through years of political triumph: Win the war . . . intermission . . . craft the Constitution and on we go. Just before Act 1 ends George III warns about the risks ahead: “What comes next?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLaCCgqJ07Y>. History bears him out. Government in the 1780s, under loose Articles of Confederation brought

competing and hostile social and economic systems close to total collapse. To survive as a nation Americans in the Northern and Southern states, holders of deeply opposing approaches, would have to find a way to work together. Yes, the resultant Constitution enabled differences to coexist. There is no-one in the US who now advocates a return to slavery, but we remain a nation of enormous differences, differences embodied in 50 quite distinctive states. Dealing with and living with difference is our future as well as our past.

HAMILTON has to leave out a lot of what came before the onset of the war. There is a limit to what a few hours in a theater can cover. In writing this piece I have opted to leave out most of what occurred after 1992, the date I pick as the onset of this current phase in the struggle with American’s founding legacies. I see in 1992 Presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan (not in George Wallace nor in Barry Goldwater) the direct precursor to Donald Trump. Buchanan was schemer willing to take positions and to claim values entirely for electoral convenience. Buchanan’s place in the limelight is now thoroughly occupied by Trump. Newt Gingrich and Roger Ailes, who also came to power in 1992, have remained influential in public discourse ever since, their powers revived again during this awful election. Ailes (head of Fox News for those outside the USA) has been fired for the very sexual assault sins of which Trump is accused. His fate represents the longer term future I consider more likely. Gingrich remains a part of Trump’s transition team which is, at this moment making the very worst possible choices for Cabinet positions anyone of us could have feared. He represents a future I abhor.

At the Richard Rogers Theater, in HAMILTON the comparable period to the times in which we are now living takes place in the intermission. The audience gets to sip wine and chat in the bar. Off-stage the actors change identities in their dressing rooms; battle scarred war heroes become committed political negotiators. The musical does not have to show us how to wait and survive through political chaos until the willingness to work across serious differences and thereby to manage the Republic arises once again.

In HAMILTON we do not see the United States becoming ungovernable, but in the 1780s, legislatures, each issuing their own currency refused to repay their war debt owed to the central government. Men fell into actual brawling in the chambers and, most serious of all, found themselves unable to resolve economic conflicts over commerce across state boundaries. The Constitutional Convention of May 1787 gathered a full 11 years after the original call for Independence. Representing their states, participants had to be wondering whether the entire structure was about to founder on the rocks. The Constitutional Convention quickly came to the conclusion that it must write an entirely new governing script for the country. It was 1790 before they could finalize and ratify the Constitution, and elect a government in the new, more stable form. The intermission in real life lasted at least nine years.

Governance in 2016 is now at risk, just as it was under the Articles of Confederation. In this timeline- by analogy Obama’s 2008 election is Yorktown, the illusion that we have achieved a



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final victory for a new kind of nation. But 2008 energized a huge segment of the country that doubted we even had a legitimate President. Birthers and more, with Donald Trump in the lead of course. Governing chaos reached new lows within two years. The 2010 elections saw Republicans gain control of both Senate and House, their members deciding that their best strategy was to stop Obama's entire agenda dead in its tracks. While the Federal Congress hasn't seen literal fisticuffs, the debating decorum that once shaped political disagreements is completely broken. Lying in campaigns has become normalized and Trump is about to nominate as Attorney General Senator Jeff Sessions, known to have perjured himself at a Senate confirmation hearing when under consideration for a Federal judgeship. This time, those of us who thought we had triumphed at our 2008 Yorktown cannot easily accept our new President either. We doubt there is a President of the whole USA. The Confederation of States in the 1780s never even tried to have one. Our current leaderless condition has at least another four years to run.

Oddly, in the coalition which brought us a Trump Presidency are extreme right wing racists who are also calling for a new Constitutional Convention. They see in a second Convention a chance to push back decisively against a more culturally inclusive society and they want to revive what they believe was a better time when greater power rested in the States. It would be unwise to go speculating too far down this road. It is clear that balancing between State and Federal power will be an enduring challenge under the US system. It is also clear that there is a huge amount of caution across the entire rest of the political spectrum at the prospect of genuinely opening the door to re-evaluating the language of the document that governs us now. I too see real value in States' rights. Policing power belongs almost exclusively to the States, and in places like California home to millions of immigrants, a State's policing power is critical to opposing Trump's anti-immigrant agenda. Whether there is a Convention or not, as HAMILTON reminds us, it is really important to try to be "In the room where it happens:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwDbOsk8D7A>. Trump's election leaves his opponents scared there will be no way even to find the door, although in the USA there are always more doors than just the national one.

HAMILTON has several key refrains. One, assigned initially to Alexander Hamilton, is quickly taken up by his fellow rebels. "I won't throw away my shot." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEHKBckBcr4>. In the war scenes the shot means an actual bullet, but usually it means my chance, my time. It's all too easy to meet intense conflict with fear and depression. The work ahead for us in 2016 may not entail violent combat but it will be very hard. The Trumps of this world do not hesitate to try, all too literally, to destroy their opponents. This election is proof of that. Still, hope for a better future requires that we hold ourselves responsible to become a genuine opposition, to find new forms that reignite serious political debate about our differences, even in this age of social media and instant communication. Trump would like nothing more than to have us brawling in the aisles, thinking only in terms of twitter, filibuster and blocking, but that would be to throw away our shot.

George Washington represents a peculiar American governing triumph from the Hamiltonian era that we also need to foster, the steady transfer of power from one leader to the next. When Washington announced he was stepping down in 1797, the Presidency had no term limits. The musical marks the moment with a wonderful exchange between Washington and Hamilton "One Last Time." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRHOcSkOudg> in which Washington lays out his

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ideals for good governance. Trump may not share Washington's ideals but he and his electorate are enthusiasts for term limits. I am guessing he too will step down when the time comes and that this next phase of struggle cannot last more than eight years.

Beyond presidential term limits, the rest of us need a shared and a clear sense of the governing realities we actually want to see, so that as the “world turns upside down” it topples in the right direction. The Constitutional challenges as I see them are: (1) To secure standing and status for those not yet decisively included under the Bill of Rights including immigrants, former felons and women of reproductive age. (2) To keep working for an Interstate Commerce which regulates corporations by challenging their casual destruction of viable working lives. (3) Constant readjustment and refinement of the balance between State and Federal rights, in particular because States have such a direct impact on voting rights and the size and shape of legislative districts.

The previous essay recognizes that we are not alone on this turning and toppling planet. For Joanna Macy, for climate change activists, advocates for refugees, minimum wage workers and millions upon millions the idea that we can turn the world's destructive economies, ecologies and social systems

upside down is as thrilling as being in the audience at HAMILTON. Design and creation are exciting. What other kinds of design cannot do is free us in the USA from the obligation to reorganize the system the Founders hoped they had settled for eternity. Their race-based model cannot satisfy us these days, nor for the future, so the United States will once again need to refresh its governing system. It will probably be able to do so, because the legacy we inherited is a system which can enable people with contradictory standpoints, who hold profoundly different values to live and disagree together.

HAMILTON's George Washington is aware that mistakes will happen and that “History has its eyes on you” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2x\\_IM8PuCxM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2x_IM8PuCxM). Although the rebels win the battle of Yorktown “You have no control who lives or dies or tells your story” . For much of the last two hundred years Hamilton's forceful advocacy of Federal power was forgotten. Now we have our eyes on that issue again, though perhaps this time wishing that the Federal power be curtailed and limited.

In search of inspiration for grueling times ahead? Listen to the entire soundtrack of HAMILTON. You can even see a short bit embodied — from the Tony Awards in New York. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5VqyCQV1Tg> Singing starts at 2:12

And for another way of contemplating our present lives, a poem written just before Obama's 2008 election, even then clearly simultaneously a somber and a joyful prospect.

## after the election

after the election  
anguish will continue—either the easy kind, the fault of my enemy,  
or the hard kind,  
the anguish my ally makes with my conniving.

after the election  
all beings will still need saving whether it rains red or blue

after the election  
bodhisattvas will still arise—either the easy kind,  
chanting like my friends,  
or the hard kind,  
those who see suffering I cannot but only my enemy can.

after the election  
all beings—all—will still need saving.

Rob Knapp October 2008

# HEADLINES

## MONEY AND WORK

**BANKRUPT UNITED AIRLINES ENDS EMPLOYEE PENSIONS**  
**GM BANKRUPT OCCUPY NY SHUT DOWN AFTER THREE MONTHS**

**BANK BAILOUTS DETROIT BANKRUPT**  
**US COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE OUTSOURCED TO EL SALVADOR**

**LONG DISTANCE CALL CENTER WORK MIGRATES TO INDIA AND THE PHILIPPINES. TAX**  
**HAVENS PANAMA PAPERS THE 1%**

**COUNTRYWIDE CORP FORECLOSES MILLIONS OF HOME LOANS CLOTHING FACTORIES IN**  
**N. CAROLINA MOVE TO VIETNAM**

**VIETNAM IS NOW REPLACING MILLIONS OF CLOTHING WORKERS WITH ROBOTS 150,000**  
**VW PASSATS A YEAR BUILT IN TENNESSEE BY ROBOTS**

**ROBOT INVENTORY INSPECTORS TAKING OVER AT LOEWS HARDWARE STORE APPLE'S NEW**  
**US-BASED MANUFACTURING PLANT WILL USE ROBOTS**

**UBER TAKES ON TAXI DRIVERS AIRBNB CUTS HOTEL CLEANING JOBS WELLS FARGO**  
**EMPLOYEES CREATED THOUSANDS OF FAKE ACCOUNTS**

## STRANGERS

**TWO MILLION FLEE SYRIA, AFGHANISTAN AND TUNISIA**

**REFUGEE CHILDREN DROWN IN THE MEDITERRANEAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS CAN**  
**ONLY SPEAK SPANISH**

**SEATAC AIRPORT SALESWOMEN WEAR HIJAB LESBOS FLOODED WITH ARRIVALS**

**HONDURAN CHILDREN ARE STRANDED PARENTLESS ON THE US BORDER MORE MEXICANS**  
**ARE LEAVING THAN ARRIVING IN THE USA**

**"ILLEGALS" DRIVING WITHOUT LICENSES OR INSURANCE**  
**CHINESE BIRTH TOURISTS ARE "STEALING" US CITIZENSHIP**

**KOREAN-ANCESTRY RESIDENTS IN JAPAN ARE HARASSED IN THE STREETS JAPAN ADMITS 9**  
**ASYLUM SEEKERS OUT OF 5000 APPLICANTS**

**POLISH PLUMBERS TAKE OVER THE PROFESSION IN THE UK SAN BERNARDINO ISIS**  
**CHARLIE HEBDO NICE**

**LONDON MUNICH BOSTON MARATHON BALI BEIJING MAN HELD AT LOS ANGELES**  
**AIRPORT**

## DEEPER THAN ELECTIONS

Americans have amazingly long election campaigns. They are expensive and can be quite dispiriting. Furthermore they happen every two years. We will get underway again soon, trying to elect and de-elect the Senators, Congresspeople and the myriad of State officials whose term is up in 2018. Hard though they are, I have come to see these campaigns as one setting in which political dialogue and debate are forced to include the public. However, there are deeper conversations we need to be having now, if elections are to help us find our way back from intense polarizations both here in the US and elsewhere.

## Redefining wealth

Around the whole world many of us (though probably not the Trump cohort) are actually delighted that there is an energetic conversation centering on raising doubts about our current patterns of materialism.

Consumption of too much stuff is bad for the planet. Consumption of differing amounts of stuff provokes destructive comparisons, leaving many, even the richest among us, feeling they are poorer than they ought to be. Consumption cannot allay the sufferings of life and death, disease and our various kinds of madness.

While respecting those who advocate a return to the “simple life” and those who see “happiness” as society’s rightful goal, my work centers on a different notion: The widespread desire to feel “wealthy.”

I was prompted to question the materialist definition of wealth by David Loy’s essay *Buddhism and Poverty*, <http://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/index.php/budhi/article/view/693/689> which in turn was prompted by a UN conference that sought, among varied cultures, new ways to recalibrate the UN’s mission to alleviate poverty. Loy’s description of the elements of wealth from the Buddhist perspective, including among others Faith, Noble Health and a Good Name, proved a great starting point.

To delve deeper, I and some others spent several tricky, intimate months exploring our autobiographies through our relationships to wealth and money. We also explored “good name,” “insurance” and other wealth-related topics according to a rubric we had by then developed: Genuine wealth has three key features — (1) It can be acquired, with the right kinds of effort, (2) One can hoard it, and (3) One can pass on its essence to the next generation. Our group work and my later investigations make me ready to assert further that (a) constructive wealth looks forward not back. It proves its existence by being inter-generational. (b) It is connected to physical health but is not the same. (c) It encourages a playful existence and also depends on a sense of purpose. (d) The Buddhists are right that equanimity is central.

Another assumption I now employ is that wealth divides into two types: sedentary and active. The sedentary might be six empty houses while their owner is in the seventh, or millions of laden storage units all over the USA or the artifacts hidden in museum basements. The active is engaged in the day to day operations of the world.

For a project that is nearly 20 years long, my wider sense of how to share its thoughts and research processes remains oddly formless. The results do seem worth sharing because it has done so much to change the way I assess my own salary and assets. It has changed the conversations Rob and I have about our relative standing as earners. It has made me much more willing to “give away” my time and expertise since I now consider that I only need salary enough

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to “make a living.” It has cast significant doubts on our national passion for insurance as the path to safety. It has left me attentive to completely different stories in the media than was once the case.

Characterizing wealth is clearly related to sustainability. New definitions of wealth are essential if we are to elect for a future that responds constructively to climate change, to social inequalities and to the inevitable suffering that simply being human brings us.

## Worklessness

An October election-season cover image on *The Economist*, which evokes Marxist peasants during the Russian Revolution marching on their masters, carried the caption “Why they’re wrong.” Today’s peasants were carrying slogans decrying Free Trade and Globalism for the Elite, and demanding that someone Protect our Jobs. There were also a fair number of nationalist and anti-immigrant placards as well.

Among the key polarizations in the USA, one results from contrasting economic options now available in “metro” versus “non-metro” areas. The Dept. of Agriculture summarizes these differences well: [https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy- population/employment-education/rural-employment-and-unemployment/#geography](https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/employment-education/rural-employment-and-unemployment/#geography). The USDA charts challenge the blithe assumption exemplified on *The Economist* cover, that globalization does not destroy jobs. The assumption is clearly false to the aircraft mechanic whose work with United Airlines is now being done in El Salvador. It means nothing to the autoworker in California who no longer has a job at GM/Toyota’s pioneering factory in Fremont, even though a few workers now make Teslas at the same plant. It means nothing to those of us who try to negotiate with “customer service” agents in India or the Philippines. States like Ohio and Michigan have lost real factory jobs. West Virginia’s valleys are seeing coal mines close one after another. In Iowa, once the whitest of white states, though despised and horrible the rural meat packing jobs are going to Spanish speaking immigrants. From time to time the Feds raid the plants and sure enough, plenty of the workers are “illegals.” Having cheaper T shirts at Walmart simply does not balance these losses.

A combination of technology, trade and wage differentials is leaving millions in developed economies without any prospect of work any time in the future. And it depends on hundreds of thousands in poorer economies like India and the Philippines to clean up US corporate mistakes. Pundits who consider themselves “advanced” are publicly discussing the possibility there will be so few jobs that a guaranteed minimum annual income will have to substitute for salary in “mature” economies. Switzerland even had a referendum on the proposition in May 2016. The Swiss voted **No**. I would have campaigned energetically for the **No** side.

Worklessness is a curse not a blessing. Those same small towns and suburbs in the USA that have lost substantive work, just like many parts of urban America during the 1970s, are now riddled with drugs and angry people. Just look at where Trump got more votes than Romney. Romney never offered more work. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/us/politics/donald-trump-voters.html>. Trump talked about it non-stop. And people, all kinds of people, really want to work.

Those in the elite who are feeling overworked themselves might value doing less, but I cannot imagine a single one of my fellow over-working adults thinking it would be a great thing to be useless to the society around one. And yet that is the prospect for millions of our fellow humans.

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This transformation is affecting young people particularly seriously. Oh, there are 50 year olds who lost their jobs in 2008 who cannot find work and are sinking into old age, also without many prospects. For young people the prospects are MUCH worse. They face a whole life time of worklessness.

In the 1970s when this issue first crossed my horizon, the unemployment rate for young black men in the inner city was an intolerable 14%. In 2016 the normative unemployment rate for all young people in virtually all developed economies is 10%. Only Japan and Germany seem to have a meaningfully lower rate. At its worst in Spain it is up at about 25%. <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/youth-unemployment-rate.htm#indicator-chart>. In the US unemployment for young people 20-24 rose from 9.8% in January 2016 to 10% in February, nearly double the rate for people older than 24. Imagine if your child had virtually no hope of a job of any kind for the rest of their lives.

Economists and business people rarely favor government regulation of business agendas. Business leaders helped engineer the TPP trade agreement to reduce government powers yet more. Much as it pains me to say this, if Trump really does withdraw from TPP on his first day, I and many of my closest friends in Japan will applaud. I will then watch with interest to see if he actually tries to develop the interventionist government policies he promised, to make infrastructure investments of course, but much more striking to penalize companies opting to move work outside the country. Who knows. He might surprise. More likely he will duck the issue.

Government does have a real role in all of this, but my largest concerns focus on the technogroupies running Google, Weibo and the like. A future of driverless vehicles is one of the clearest examples of the wrong-headed direction they are trying to force us to travel.

Current driving patterns bring out in people some really striking collaborative plus individual human capacities. Sharing the highways with each other, often at 70 m.p.h., we successfully guide highly explosive, very heavy vehicles hundreds of times a year. Throughout each trip, we concentrate, maneuver, attend to others around us, look at the view and plan routes. I don't love driving and I know that planetary health requires that we drive less, but I am genuinely impressed that we can do it and do it together. I have no desire to passively sit in the back seat while being driven around by sensors and Google maps, in the midst of thousands of other vehicles being driven the same way.

My concerns do NOT rest on the likely failure of the sensors, though far too many will undoubtedly fail. They do rest somewhat on the fact that the firms designing these cars keep talking about fleet cars, likely assuming that they can replace the private wealth embodied in individually owned cars with corporate systems under their own control.

By far my largest concern rests on stripping away yet another traditionally high salary job. Truck Driver is the most common job title in over half the US States. There are about 1.8 million truckers who could be made workless because machines allegedly will do the job "more safely." Teslas may be most visible in the media but the corporate titans have their eyes on more operational savings by cutting all those truckers off the payroll.

Previous innovations have prompted "luddite" responses like mine, but unemployment rates among young people in the majority of developed economies, coinciding as they do with the kinds of election results I listed in the first essay, may well be all the testimony we need of the political risks that result from worklessness.

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At a more fantastical level, my qualms intensify whenever industry gurus like Elon Musk or Richard Branson enthuse about space tourism. There is too much in their visions that resonates with those fantasy video games and movies that are directed at adolescent boys. We should instead be organizing future business and technology so as to use human energies here on earth to sustain and maintain the fabric — both planetary and human — with which we are endowed.

Some pioneers of the future of work that I want to applaud are repurposing the empty city lots all across Detroit. Others are returning to the land to farm and raise food a few acres at a time. They are providing home-based health care. Some are even home schooling. However laudable they may be, these projects are more backward than forward looking and largely local. The global scale techno enthusiasms currently dominating the stock markets cannot be reoriented by small scale, retro ventures.

The one national-scale economy that seems to have an embedded long-view tradition which can coexist with a love of robots is Japan. Japan also has a strenuously anti-internationalist population, so for an internationalist like me they are probably no more of a guide than small scale farmers. And yet, I am confident that human brains and physical energies should be a vital resource in a sustainable world. They are naturally renewable and can be attuned well to social and planetary needs. We should not shed them in favor of a world run by “intelligent machines.” Machines don’t know how to love.

## Mercy in a punitive world

Wealth and Work are clearly always part of the political discourse in the USA. I bring mercy into this document, because the differences between those who yearn to punish and those who do not is actually as deep and as deeply polarizing as wealth and work. Furthermore crime and punishment can and do swing elections. Remember Willie Horton? In this arena I am not sure we have even the beginnings of a common language for the debate, but I believe that our work, our lives and our politics should aim to reduce suffering and not to increase or extend it.

US history is plenty punitive. States in the NE USA were founded by Puritans who knew that God’s punishment was the fate of those who violated their God’s will. Modern fundamentalism has given us apocalyptic thinking. Racism left us a legacy of thousands of 20th century lynchings, preceded by millions of brutal acts against the enslaved. Frontier justice led to shoot-outs among whites and between “settlers” and the native population. Today there is “shoot before you talk” policing. There is also direct opposition to mercy exemplified by fury about the prospect of “amnesty” for immigrants who lack papers. Under Jimmy Carter, the amnesty for Vietnam War evaders was at least as controversial.

In 2016 we saw the direct electoral consequences in all of this. Hillary Clinton really was defeated in part because, if he won, Donald Trump promised to put her in prison, to punish her for her email, or Benghazi, or Clinton Foundation actions. US military personnel handling anything classified have all been trained that prison is the response for her kind of careless handling of materials and they voted against Hillary in record numbers. Until recently the “war on crime” was also an electoral winner, though these days the cost of incarceration has been reducing the political and electoral appeal of lock ’em up politics. Any President or a State governor who commutes a sentence will find that brings down on them significant political hostilities.



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The USA has the highest rate of incarceration in the world not because we have the highest rate of wrong-doing, but because recovering from difficult problems by punishing people is a powerful US cultural mantra. We are not alone. What, after all, was the Cultural Revolution if not nation-wide punishment wrought by millions of Chinese on millions of the others for their alleged personal failure to commit fully to the communist state?

Mercy entails actively taking a decision not to punish after wrongdoing. It is not identical to forgiveness and has nothing at all to do with forgetting that the wrong occurred. Forgiveness requires a change of heart and mind which can take years. Mercy is simply an action. Or rather a non-action. The action is forbearance, it is a holding off. It is often available as an action long before forgiveness becomes possible.

Why be merciful? Because wrong-doing results in suffering and punishment extends the suffering in time and extends it as well to a wider community. The criminal steals your wallet and spends your money. You suffer, suffering financially for a while and with a sense of violation that probably extends rather longer. The criminal is caught and sent to jail. You regain neither the money nor the sense of freedom from violation though satisfying some desire for revenge may help. The criminal's family is now also swept into the suffering and the jail sentence will have ramifications that last distinctly longer than the time served. I do not use this example to argue that we should never punish thieves. I use it simply as a reminder that punishment extends pain, that punishment is intended to extend pain.

Buddhism spells out the most explicit doctrines about reducing suffering but mercy is central to other major belief systems as well. Islam idealizes 99 names for Allah but the two used most often are “the compassionate” and “the merciful.” In Christian prayer, “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy” repeat again and again. Even ethics in war respect mercy, despite purposeful injury and suffering on the battlefield. In Rome in classical times, scenes carved on the caskets of great generals routinely showed them merciful towards defeated opponents. In more modern times, General Grant allowed Confederate troops to leave the field after the surrender at Appomattox still wearing their swords, the embodiment of a promise of mercy. Mercy does not prevent us from honestly accumulating evidence about the wrongs being done, but, unlike Donald Trump, I am clear that we should not try to gain advantage by promising to punish those on our list of wrongdoers.

Two of the leading spiritual figures alive today articulate important features of mercy and its ally compassion. Pope Francis has declared this a Jubilee Year of Mercy, honoring the belief that God's greatest gift is mercy. It is available repeatedly to those who confess their sins. Mercy and truth are connected, as the South Africans spelled out in the terms for their Reconciliation Commission, but mercy requires of us nothing more than a full recognition that wrong has been done. The Dalai Lama, exploring the emotional and spiritual cost to the specific Chinese soldiers and business people on the ground most actively violating Tibetan culture, urges compassion. Compassion is clearly close to mercy but not the same. They are equally necessary in this world turning upside down. There is more to say on this, as well as on other ways of understanding mercy, but not here.

Fifteen years of research leave me with a conviction: We should not be frightened of being merciful. Among Buddhist bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara/QuanYin/Kannon has standing because, with up to 11 heads, he/she is willing to listen for and hear all the sounds of suffering and because, with up to 1000 arms, she/he has access to the precise tools needed to ease suffering. Like Mary and like Allah, Kannon is a source of evidence and wisdom about how to be merciful,

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and to believers is a source of mercy itself. Our ordinary responses to tsunamis and hurricanes, to fires and family crises, demonstrate our secular expertise in the same arena, as we practice again and again the humane responses that arise in a merciful self.

Merciful actions will not create chaos. Where punishment is intended to extend pain both wider and longer than the original wrongdoing, merciful acts will help to reduce though hardly to eliminate suffering.

Elections or no elections, the knowledge that we can offer and receive mercy builds a foundation under the peace of mind we all still need, if we are to remain constructive in the midst of profoundly differing views, while the world turns upside down.

## WOMEN AND OTHER NEW FRONTIERS

At a celebration about 14 years ago commemorating “25 years of women at Harvard,” the university managed simultaneously to imply that it deserved all the credit for the education of women in the city of Cambridge (USA) and completely to erase the existence of Radcliffe College, which had been educating those very same women for nigh on 100 years. The President of Radcliffe was not even part of the ceremony.

For the 2020 election, on the 100th anniversary of the ratification of women’s suffrage in this country, we will none of us forget that Hillary Clinton was the first woman allowed seriously to imagine that she might become President. Nor will we forget the misogyny, nor the outrageous media coverage, nor the many other insults heaped upon her during the campaign. She was not the first woman to campaign seriously. Shirley Chisholm in 1972 takes that honor. A worthy candidate if ever there was one, standing proudly in favor of full civil rights for all and against the Vietnam War. But more than 220 years of US history still leave us without the example of a woman President. If Obama’s election represents Yorktown in our quest for a new version of this nation, the election of a woman as President could well be the sign that these difficult years would be coming to an end. For sure, as the Schuyler sisters sing out in HAMILTON, we are going to “include women in the sequel.”

Now that we need another woman for the sequel, I am looking in the States in the American Southwest and West. Like Louisiana but without a heritage of African Americans held in slavery, these States came into the US federation with an existing, richly varied cultural heritage. Indian tribes in Arizona and New Mexico still hold their ancestral lands. Spanish names and Spanish language pre-date entry into the USA. The western states look in the direction of the Pacific Ocean, and their trade and economic lives are focused as much in Asia as any in other part of the world. California, the first state to acknowledge the full costs of pollution, is these days taking the lead on responding to climate change. And this new US President will have company. In the UK, Nicola Sturgeon has already taken her place in the sequel, and in Germany Angela Merkel is bravely trying to straddle old and new worlds.

Our world is turning and in turmoil but no matter where it settles for the next phase, it does have some kind of future. Getting to a stable version of that future depends on creating and designing systems that enable people with deeply differing views to be at ease with being interdependent with one another. The political system in the in the USA can make that possible, when it is working well. If US contributions to the new world are to enrich rather than damage, we will surely rest on, but must decisively reconfigure our traditions: of frontier and opportunity, of adaptability and enthusiasm, of enlightenment and education. And as Obama repeatedly reminded us during his first campaign, we must do so with that most American of instincts, we need to believe there is hope.

## Author Biography



Helena Meyer-Knapp is a scholar/activist and also an immigrant in the USA, whose work centers on peace-making. She earned a BA in History at Oxford in the UK, the country of her birth, and an MA in Communications and a PhD in Interdisciplinary Political Studies in the USA. Her scholarly work includes *Dangerous Peace-Making*, a book published in 2003. It centers on case studies of serious attempts at peace-making that occurred in the 1990s, and on post war justice and reconciliation. She has also published essays on teaching, on ethics, and the links between a nation's heritage and personal identity. She was a member of the faculty at the Evergreen State College, (international relations and political studies) from 1984 - 2106. Since 2001 she has worked regularly in NE Asia, most often in Japan but also in South Korea. As an activist she defined her personal engagement in the 1980s around the local and national elections and referenda in support of the Campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Freeze. Her college teaching has routinely included courses designed to support students as they gathered the materials, skills and the momentum needed to participate on their own behalf in public life.

Website for the links: [Peacemakerpress.com](http://Peacemakerpress.com)

# Easy by Nature

True goodness  
Is like water. Water's good  
for everything.  
It doesn't compete.

It goes right  
to the low loathsome places and so finds the way.

For a house,  
the good thing is level ground.  
In thinking,  
depth is good.  
The good of giving is magnanimity; of speaking, honesty;  
of government, order.  
The good of work is skill,  
and of action, timing.

No competition, so no blame.

Tao Te Ching

Translated by Ursula Le Guin (1997)