

Integrities

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VOLUME 33 No. 2 2020

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*Black Lives Matter Protests
in Santa Cruz, June 2020.
Photos courtesy of Santa
Cruz Sentinel*

*Bottom photo Santz Cruz
police in solidarity with
protestors.*



Cover photo by Karen Cane

OVERWHELMED

To be marooned at home by the coronavirus is a lonely experience. And frightening: we are aware of more and more people dying, and we face the possibility of death ourselves. Awareness of the coronavirus seems to be inside of us and all around us—even in the air we breathe.

How can we escape from letting it overwhelm us ?

Charlotte Selver always encouraged us to live in the *present moment*: to be aware of what is happening *right now*. “Every moment,” she used to say, “*is a moment*.” At the present time, we need to live *IN* the moment, instead of letting our minds wander. We need to stay conscious of what we are doing *right now*. I have been trying to follow Charlotte’s advice, especially when thoughts of the coronavirus threaten to overwhelm me.



Photo: “Cat in quarantine”
by Karen Cane

The present moment is really all we have.

“Is it possible that we could feel more deeply and fully what we happen to be doing at this moment, and allow fuller contact with it? So that not the past and not the future, and not the anger about

what happened two minutes ago or ten years ago stands in our way and holds us back—but we are all there for what is *now*.”

THE PRESENCE OF DEATH

We are constantly being bombarded by the number of people who now have the coronavirus, and by the growing number of people who have died. We are surrounded by accounts of death.

I have been letting myself feel the possibility of my own death. And I have been going over the deaths of exceptional people I have known—people who saw their own death coming and who accepted it with loving hearts.

Cathy Williams died a few months ago. When I last saw her, she was in a coma, but when I reached out and held her hand she opened her eyes and looked at me. As I held her hand, her face gave me a smile of love and acceptance—a beautiful smile that has stayed with me ever since. She was filled with love and a readiness to die. Her smile still fills my heart.

I remember Bill Hamlet years ago, when he had cancer and was dying. When people would tell him that he was going to get better, his reply was simple: “*No, I’m going to die, but I want to talk to you . . .*”

And Bill would have a heart-to-heart-talk with them. He had accepted his own death, but before it, he wanted to connect in a very heartfelt way with those he loved.

I visited Joan Murphy in the hospital when she was dying and I told her that I loved her. She replied, “I love you too—and that’s all that matters.”

“That’s all that matters. . .” I can still see Joan saying that with a smile as she was dying.

My own awareness of dying has led me to think of others who are alive. Recently, I have been trying to make more contact with friends—phoning or emailing them. Our bond with others can be strengthened by our awareness of death. Instead of thinking of what needs to be done next, we have more time to think of our friends—and appreciate them.

UNDER DEATH THREAT

I remember many years ago traveling with groups of people in Guatemala who were under death threat. They took precautions, but they went about their lives without letting the possibility of death overwhelm them or slow them down. They had learned to live very full lives. They had certain things to do, certain people to help, and they went about their lives without letting death threats get in their way.

In a sense, we all live now with a heightened threat of death. It can make us alarmed and wary, but it can make us more aware of what a wonder being alive is. And it can help us *treasure* being alive.

REGENERACIÓN RECEIVES AN AWARD

Regeneración, an organization in Watsonville that IF has helped to fund since its beginning, was recently awarded a \$25,000 grant as runner-up in the American Climate Leadership Awards. Nancy Faulstich, the current executive director of *Regeneración*, and a small group of people started the organization in 2016.

Regeneración is a place-based grassroots climate action organization located in the Pajaro Valley. It was founded on the belief that the local impacts of climate change should be addressed locally in order to build resilient communities. Watsonville, the Pajaro Valley's primary City, is a community of 53,452. The major industries are agriculture and food processing. The majority of residents are farmworkers of Latino descent who survive on low incomes and are very vulnerable to the impacts of climate changes.

Farmworkers plant, cultivate, harvest and pack fruits and vegetables in the US. Their work during the time of the Coronavirus has been deemed essential. In the Pajaro Valley where strawberries are a major crop, the hand labor of farmworkers has always been essential for the production of blemish free berries, as well as the flowers, cauliflower, broccoli and artichokes grown there. The working conditions of farmworkers are frequently substandard, including long hours of stoop labor in the fields, extreme heat, exposure to pesticides, and lack of shade and adequate drinking water. In addition, farmworkers are excluded from the overtime provisions of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and typically earn low wages. Because a majority of farmworkers are

undocumented and fear deportation, they seldom protest their poor working conditions or report employer's violation of health and safety laws.

Regeneración works with the Pajaro Valley community to increase awareness of climate change and its impacts on farmworkers and other local residents. Regeneración conducted a grass roots survey in 2017-18 to identify the effects of environmental changes on Pajaro Valley workers, both farmworkers and non-agricultural workers. Pesticide exposure was a concern of a majority of all workers, while the two most common concerns related to climate change were heat waves and high temperatures. Survey respondents identified priorities for action that Regeneración translated into policy recommendations to local government, including bringing renewable energy to the community and safe and affordable transportation. Recently Regeneración published a brochure in Spanish and English about heat stress, which is a major concern to farmworkers. The brochure describes the symptoms of heat stroke and heat exhaustion, how to prevent these conditions, and what to do when a worker exhibits symptoms of heat stress.

Regeneración views climate change as a social justice issue. Watsonville City Councilman, Francisco "Paco" Estrada, who also serves on the Board of Regeneración said "without the organization's efforts the city's large farmworker community would remain unrepresented in local response efforts." He further

explained Regeneración's place-based approach to climate action. "We are building an inclusive and inspirational climate justice movement that's relevant to our area." Regeneración's success can serve as a model for the nation.

PIETRO AMEGLIO ON MEXICO'S DRUG WAR

For many years now, IF has been helping support Pietro Ameglio, who, among other things, educates young college students to work for peace in Mexico. A recent article in *National Catholic Reporter* described his work and the astonishingly violent context in Mexico (Peace scholar says finding disappeared victims of Mexico's drug war 'a moral issue', (<https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/peace-scholar-says-finding-disappeared-victims-mexicos-drug-war-moral-issue>) What follows is a condensed version of Claire Schaefer-Duffy's article:

The drug war, Ameglio tells us, has killed tens of thousands of Mexicans and infiltrated the country with criminality. Yet in these difficult circumstances, people are engaged in movements to build peace. Ameglio describes nonviolent initiatives in Mexico, a country he describes as "riddled by acts of war."

Former Mexican President Felipe Calderón first declared war on Mexico's drug trade in December 2006, deploying the military to combat cartels. The policy proved to be catastrophic. The cartels expanded, and the war, now in its second decade, has resulted in at least 150,000 homicides, with the tally still rising.

According to government records, more than 61,000 Mexicans are missing or disappeared.

All the cartels, Ameglio tells us, include business people, members of the police, military and paramilitaries, as well as local, state, and federal government officials. He cited a 2011 study done by UNAM that found organized crime directly employs 600,000 people and is one of Mexico's biggest employers. The person who works as a municipal bureaucrat by day might also drive for the cartels at night. "So if you go to report something, you don't know who you are dealing with."

Ordinary Mexicans are pushing back. In early 2019, Ameglio joined volunteers with the fourth National Search Brigade as they looked for the disappeared in Guerrero, an impoverished state known for its tourist attractions, poppy production, and ghoulish violence. From Jan. 18 to Feb. 2 last year, the brigade combed hillsides and desert scrub searching for human remains.

About 180 people from 18 states participated, making the fourth National Search Brigade the largest one organized by Enlace Nacionales (National Links), a coalition of grassroots organizations founded by María Herrera, mother of four disappeared sons. During the two-week event, searchers found seven bodies and more than 60 other bones, Ameglio said.

The Peace of Wild Things*by Wendell Berry*

When despair for the world grows in me
 and I wake in the night at the least sound
 in fear of what my life and my
 children's lives may be,
 I go and lie down where the
 wood drake
 rests in his beauty on the water, and
 the great heron feeds.
 I come into the peace of wild
 things
 who do not tax their lives with
 forethought
 of grief. I come into the presence of still water.



*Photo of "Egret" and "Cow in still water"
 by Karen Cane*

And I feel above me the day-
 blind stars
 waiting with their light. For a
 time
 I rest in the grace of the world,
 and am free.

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