



Nebraskans for Peace

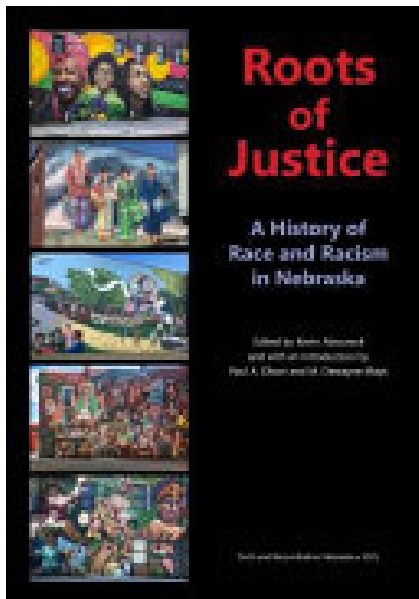
# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2025  
VOLUME 53, NO. 4

## New Book Explores Nebraska's Untold Racial History

*Roots of Justice: A History of Race and Racism in Nebraska* invites honest conversations about the past and hope for the future.



"Roots of Justice, A History of Race and Racism in Nebraska," which tells stories of Nebraskans that have not always been told, is now available for free as an online book at UNL Digital Commons. On-demand print copies can be ordered for a fee.

This project tells a shared history of the state in focusing on Native Americans, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Nebraskans, and refugees who arrived after the Vietnam War.

"These fact-based accounts are the work of nearly five years of research and writing by five teams of writers," said Dewayne Mays, president of the NAACP Lincoln Branch. "The book tells stories of everyday Nebraskans who struggled and triumphed as they sought to make their lives across the state, from Ne-

braska City to Alliance, Omaha to Scottsbluff, Lincoln to North Platte and many communities in between."

The book tells of Black homesteaders creating a community in Cherry County, the Ku Klux Klan driving laundryman Sin Goon out of North Platte, vibrant refugee communities organizing to help new arrivals, mistreatment of Lakota farm laborers in western Nebraska, the Sundown Town of Havelock, and much more. Read about the desegregation of Lincoln's Municipal Pool, Mildred Brown's fight for civil rights in Omaha, the demographics of majority Latino towns and other towns that are nearly so.

"We hope this history will become more broadly known and that Nebraskans will respond with open hearts and minds," Mays said. "Our intent is that local communities, organizations and policymakers will be inspired to actions which foster a greater sense of belonging for all peoples across our home state. We all belong here."

The Lincoln Branch of the NAACP and Nebraskans for Peace first developed and planned this work. The target audience is any and every Nebraskan who is curious about the good, the bad and the ugly of our history, Mays said.

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## Nebraska Report

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## Nebraskans for Peace

NFP is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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## Thank You for Making Our 55th Anniversary Celebration a Success

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us and helped spread the word about our 55th Anniversary Celebration in Lincoln. Because of your support, more than 150 people came together throughout the day to mark this historic milestone for the nation's oldest state-wide peace and justice organization.

The stories shared, the conversations sparked, and the sense of community that filled the space reminded us why this work matters so deeply. Seeing longtime supporters connect with new faces—and witnessing the passion that continues to grow across generations—was truly inspiring. Moments like these

renew our commitment and strengthen our hope for the future we're building together.

Your presence and commitment to our shared mission made the celebration truly special. We are grateful to each of you who helped make this moment in our history one to remember.



*Because the  
system isn't*

# BROKEN

## The OG Robber Barons Elitists and their Master Plan— The United States Constitution.

by Schmeeka Simpson

When I say OG, I mean Original Gangsters—the ones who laid the blueprint, not the ones who inherited it. And when I say Robber Baron, I'm not talking about Rockefeller or Carnegie or J.P. Morgan. I'm talking about the Founding Fathers. A **Robber Baron** is someone who builds wealth by exploiting land, labor, and law while writing rules to protect their dominance. Before Rockefeller, Carnegie, or J.P. Morgan, there were: **Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton**. The legal architects of early America. They didn't just use the system—they **engineered it** to protect their class forever.

Because long before corporate monopolies, oil empires, or Wall Street tycoons, there were men in powdered wigs who understood one thing better than anyone else: If you write the rules, you never lose the game. Their “revolutions” were not rebellions—they were reorganizations—reallocation of power and rebranding of control. The American Revolution was an upgrade to a system designed to protect the wealthy from accountability. Today, we call them visionaries. But let's tell the truth: They were the **OG Robber Barons** of this nation. The story we are taught is patriotism. The story they lived in was profit.

The Founding Fathers were not moral philosophers. They were **economic tacticians**, and the historical record is clear:

The **Founding Fathers** were **robbers** of Indigenous land, **thieves** of African bodies, **slave masters** who built fortunes off unpaid labor, **insider traders** who speculated on land before treaties

were signed, **liars** who preached liberty while practicing brutality, **promise breakers** who honored no treaty, no humanity, no equality. Let the record reflect:

- **Indian Removal Policy groundwork (1790s–1810s)** set the stage for later forced displacement. **Doctrine of Discovery (U.S. v. Johnson, 1823)**
- The Supreme Court ruled that Indigenous nations could not hold land in the same way Europeans could. **Treaty violations:** Over 500 treaties were signed and later broken or unilaterally altered by the U.S. government.
- **Theft of African labor: Transatlantic Slave Trade (legal until 1808)** was explicitly protected in **Article I, Sec. 9 of the U.S. Constitution**. Enslaved people were counted as **3/5 of a person** under **Article I, Sec. 2**, boosting slave-state political power and still are under the guise of incarceration. Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe were all major slaveholders.
- **Insider trading:** Founders speculated on western land **before treaties were signed**, **Ohio Company land speculation (1780s)**, **Yazoo Land Fraud (1795)**. They used insider government information to buy cheap and sell high.
- **Liars & promise-breakers:** The **Treaty of New York (1790) with the Creek Nation was violated within a few years**; the **Treaty of Holston (1791)** with the Cherokee was undermined by illegal white settlement that federal officials refused to prevent.

The Founders did not free themselves from tyranny—they **replicated it with themselves at the top**.

It was never the land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. It has always been the Land of the Thieves and the Home of the Slaves. America wasn't built on democracy—it was built on **commodities**. Land as a commodity. Black and Native American lives are commodities. Women and children as commodities. Treaties as a commodity. Freedom as a commodity. The Founders were not escaping tyranny. They were escaping **competition**. They wanted a world where *they* didn't have to answer to a king—because they intended to become kings themselves. The Constitution was, and is, basically a how-to guide on writing laws that serve your interests and on maintaining power while building wealth and enshrining class in perpetuity.

Step 1: **Define the property broadly, then protect ownership at all costs.**

Make sure it includes land, livestock, buildings, and people. **Three-Fifths Compromise (1787)**, The **Fugitive Slave Clause (Art. IV, Sec. 2)** required enslaved people to be returned to owners. **Slave Trade Protection** until 1808 (Art. I, Sec. 9) **Contract Clause (Art. I, Sec. 10)** Prevented states from interfering with private contracts—including slave contracts. **Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)** declared Black people “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” This ruling explicitly defined personhood to serve the elite. The **5th Amendment “Takings Clause”**

*continued on page 10*



# There is still an inside/outside line

## Roots of Justice: A History of Race and Racism in Nebraska

*Excerpt from A History of Native People in Nebraska, Part I, by Gabriel Bruguier*

From 1990 to 2003, my father, [Leonard Bruguier], was the Director of the Institute of American Indian Studies at the University of South Dakota (USD). His journey there had taken him from the village of Greenwood on the Yankton Sioux Reservation, to the city of Yankton, South Dakota, where he excelled academically and athletically in high school but was the constant recipient of racist insults and segregation from the white student body, to the United States Marine Corps; where he served two combat tours in Vietnam; and as a “non-traditional student” to university studies at USD, and later at Oklahoma State University.<sup>1</sup> Above all the numerous services he facilitated for Native students at USD, he believed that the most important aspect of the Institute was serving as a sacred home for the oral history of the Plains tribes. In 2002, he wrote of the Institute:

*South Dakota Oral History Center serves as the heart of the Institute of American Indian Studies. The Center is important because it preserves the voices and life experiences of thousands of individuals from various locations throughout our universe. Because many of those people who shared themselves for posterity have departed from this life, the Institute’s director and staff view the recorded interviews as a repository of information and as a memorial to what these people accomplished and contributed to humanity. In the words of the Nakota Oyate, the South Dakota Oral History Center is nina wakan, very sacred.*<sup>2</sup>

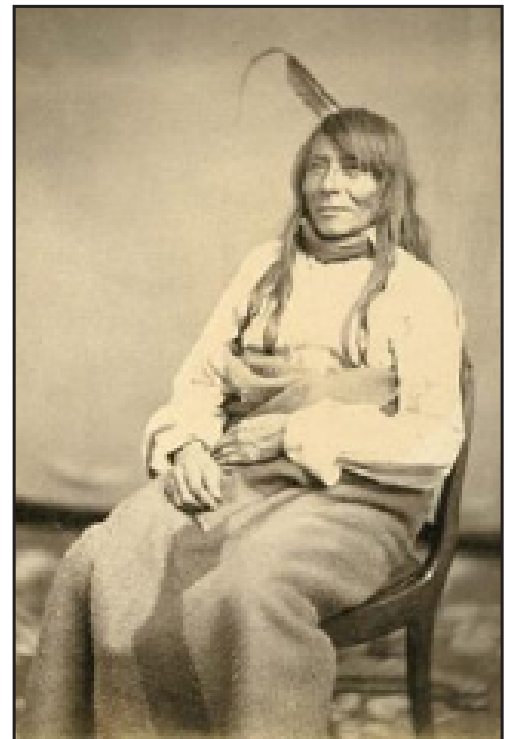
Elsewhere, he said of his role at the Institute, “I’ve been put in charge of keeping the voices. Many of the people are no longer with us. I consider it a very spiritual place.”<sup>3</sup>

Oral history, and especially Native oral history, was at the time a contested source of evidence for historians. It was dismissed by scholars as folklore, myth, or legend; not valuable to the historical record. Native historians pushed back against this; my father’s view was that “All history is built on oral history. Books and newspaper articles are just written oral history, but they are taken as fact.”<sup>4</sup> The oral history that shaped him as a person, and consequently as a scholar, is as urgent then as it is now. It has come down to me, and I proceed as an extension of that legacy.

We are descendants of Chief *Padaniapapi*, also known as Struck By the Ree, a signatory of the 1858 Treaty of Washington and the leader of the Yankton Sioux Tribe as they transitioned to reservation life. *Padaniapapi* was troubled by the encroachment of white settlers on the border of the Yankton’s territory, on the east by what are now the states of Minnesota and Iowa, and on the south by what is now the state of Nebraska. Though there was dissent among the other headmen of the Yankton, *Padaniapapi* was resigned to treaty negotiations with the United States government in order to secure a permanent homeland for his people. Though he worked tirelessly to adopt the new way of life and encouraged it for the Yankton people, his efforts were hampered by the government’s failure to uphold its end of the treaty. In 1865 he testified:

*When I went to make my treaty, my grandfather (ie. the U.S. President)*

*agreed, if I would put three young men to work, he would put one white laborer with them to learn them; that I should put three young men to learn ploughing, and he would put one white man to learn them; also, three to sow, three to learn the carpenter’s trade, three to learn the blacksmith’s trade, and such other trades as we should want; and my great grandfather was to furnish one white man for each trade to learn the young men. My grandfather also said that a school should be established for the*



*Chief Struck by the Ree, c. 1858*  
Photo credit: Akta Lakota Museum & Cultural Center

*conclusion on page 6*

# Inside/outside line, conclusion

*nation to learn them to read and write; that the young boys and girls should go to school, and that the young men who worked should have the same pay as the whites. My grandfather told me if my young men would go to work that the money going to those who would not work should be given to those who would work. None of these things have been fulfilled...*

*My friend, I think if my young men knew how to sow, farm, carpenter, and do everything else, I could send the white men away; we ourselves should have the money paid the white men, and we should have plenty of money. If we had been learned all these things we could support ourselves, have plenty of money, have schools, and I could have written my great grandfather, and have got a letter from him; I could have written him myself what I wanted.*

*...If I had understood from what my grandfather told me that I was to be treated as I have been, I would never have done as I have done; I never would have signed the treaty.... The Great Spirit knows that I have spoken the truth; knows what I say"*

These are the stories my father grew up with. The same stories have been told within countless families on the reservations of Nebraska and among those tribes that were relocated from their homelands. The larger historical reality that emerges is of the betrayal of sacred, binding agreements, of broken promises to be welcomed into a new nation, of prosperity that never came.

By the time of my father's childhood, conditions on the reservation had barely improved. He recalled hard times and a people still struggling as the state around them prospered. Later in life he recalled of his childhood,

*In the late 1940s, I can remember going hungry for two or three days at a time. It was hot ... seemed like it never*

*rained. We'd spend a lot of time at the river. We ate plants ... Sheep Showers (Sheep Sorrel). They looked like four leaf clovers and tasted kinda [sic] sour ... could make your nose wrinkle. We ate plums, rosebuds, and wild onions. I still eat Sheep Showers and plums ... to renew my acquaintance with them. **Our stories are the same. We carry them on because what they're for... to draw strength from. When I remember how my relatives lived through hard times, I can cope with today, even though today...it's not that much better.** (emphasis mine)*

For me, my father's story is a significant part of the oral history of the Yankton people. It is an intermediate point between my relatives of early Yankton reservation life and our own time. I've started here to tell you where I come from, and why it is important to look back to the recent past to understand where we are now. While reflecting on the historical material that I present in

this chapter, while comparing past times against the current political culture, I am often led to conclude as my father did so many years ago, that things are not much better than they were when he was recalling his childhood on the reservation. A difference, however, is that from my vantage point, I can qualify the thought to say that *certain* things are not much better. It is undeniable that material conditions have improved on reservations, and in the towns and cities in which the majority of Natives within the state of Nebraska live; that tribal communities in Nebraska, despite being located in food deserts, have been empowered (and fed) by Indigenous Food Sovereignty movements; and that we no longer have to fear unchecked naked aggression against us. Nevertheless, there is still an inside/outside line drawn between the white majority class and Native populations, with Natives still outside, and a widespread ignorance and occlusion of Native history and culture, to name just a few issues.

## REFERENCES:

<sup>1</sup> It brought me to tears to read about aspects of his student years in Yankton, which he never told me about, but were recorded by one of his mentors, Dr. Herbert Hoover, who featured my father as an exemplar of a modern-day Native man who is rooted in both traditional practices and the "modern" world. Herbert T. Hoover and Leonard R. Bruguier, *The Yankton Sioux* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 95-7.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard R. Bruguier and Scott E. White, "The Institute of American Indian Studies: A Tradition of Scholarly Pursuit," *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal* 2 no. 1 (Spring 2001): 5. Online: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/0e90ee11-54af-479b-ae60-301bc45eb964/content>

<sup>3</sup> Marjane Ambler, "History in the First Person: Always Valued in the Native World, Oral History Gains Respect among Western Scholars," *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education* 6, no 4 (Spring 1995): <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/history-person-valued-native-world-oral-history-gains-respect-western-scholars/>

<sup>4</sup> Ambler, "History in the First Person"

Palaneapope, "How the Indians Are Victimized by Government Agents and Soldiers," in *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy Over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice*, ed. Roy L. Brooks (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 254-256. <https://doi-org.libproxy.unl.edu/10.18574/nyu/9780814739471.003.0046>

# Biweekly Environmental Legislative Calls

Join us for Biweekly Environmental Legislative Calls!

Stay informed and engaged this legislative session by joining our biweekly Environmental Legislative Calls every other Tuesday at 12 noon beginning Tuesday, January 13th. We hope you'll join us in shaping a greener, more sustainable Nebraska.

If you are interested in joining the calls please email Brittany Cooper NFP Executive Director at [nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org](mailto:nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org) to receive the zoom information.

These calls are a great way to:

- Stay up to date on environmental legislation in Nebraska.
- Hear directly from policy experts and advocates.
- Learn how you can make your voice heard.

Nebraskans for Peace Executive Director Brittany Cooper will facilitate the calls and we will be joined by our legislative experts:

**Mark Brohman, Executive Director, Wachiska Audubon**

**Ken Winston, Chapter Director, Nebraska Sierra Club**

**Al Davis, Lobbyist, Nebraska Sierra Club**

Other experts, including legislators and advocates may join us from time to time.

## Legislative Experts Bios:

**Mark Brohman**, Executive Director of Wachiska Audubon. For 13 years Mark worked for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in Lincoln, including 6 years as their lobbyist. Then he was the Executive Director for the Nebraska Environmental Trust for 15 years and has been with Wachiska the last three years. He grew up in Custer County near Broken Bow, graduating from Callaway High School, received a B.S. from Chadron State College in Biology and Chemistry with a Math minor, a Mas-

ter's degree from UNL in Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife with an Entomology minor, and a law from UNL's College of Law. He is a board member of Friends of the Niobrara, Back To The River, and Chadron State College's Foundation.

**Ken Winston** is a man of many hats in the world of environmental leadership. He is currently the Chapter Director for the Nebraska Sierra Club. Previously he was the Executive Director of Nebraska Interfaith Power & Light from 2017 to 2025 and a community organizer for the Nebraska Sierra Club from 2020 to 2025. He also represented the Nebraska Sierra Club as a policy advocate before the Legislature for 14 years. He led their successful opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, both as an attorney and policy advocate. Recently, he has been engaged in efforts to encourage our public power districts to move away from fossil fuels, increase investments in renewable energy, and help people reduce their energy bills. He has led activities opposing factory farms, supporting regenerative agriculture, and local food. He has coordinated the Nebraska Youth Climate Summit since 2017.

**Al Davis** comes from a pioneer ranch family with roots in southwest Cherry County, where his grandfather homesteaded in 1888. Al is a graduate of Hyannis High School. He attended Creighton University and graduated from the University of Denver with a degree in History and Economics. Al also spent a year studying theatre at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City. Al was an enthusiastic participant in community betterment programs in Hyannis and served on local school boards for decades before running for the Legislature in 2012. He was elected and took office in January 2013. Al has served as a lobbyist for the Sierra Club since 2020. He serves on the board of Nonpartisan Nebraska and the Nebraska Farmers Union.

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# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

## What's Wrong With A-I? Two Words: Carbon Dioxide

Artificial Intelligence (A-I), through stocks such as Nvidia has become the hottest ticket to heaven, when it's not the road to hell in the S&P 500. What other stock could lose \$600 billion worth of paper value in one day, and then make it back? At a White House dinner in September, 2025, Mark Zuckerberg said that Meta would spend \$600 billion on data centers and related infrastructure.

Either way, at the rate that the biggest capitalist juggernauts of our time (did I hear Amazon, et al.?) are building power plants to manufacture energy that will power these monstrosities, the Earth loses. And why is that? With their fossil fuel energy demands, these plants are going to produce massive amounts of carbon dioxide.

You say you haven't heard? *The Omaha World-Herald* and *The New York Times* haven't spent a thimble of energy on A-I from this angle? Oh, the *World-Herald* did give a spare two and a half inches November 4, 2025, describing how Amazon closed a \$38 billion deal with Open AI "that will enable the ChatGPT maker to run its artificial intelligence systems on hundreds of thousands of Nvidia's specialized AI chips through Amazon's Web Services.

Isn't this the same Amazon that recently laid off almost 30,000 human beings? If you have been a large stockholder in Nvidia, however, you may have smiled over a small slice of Nvidia's brief spurt to \$5 trillion in market value. Microsoft nicked \$4 trillion.



So much for high finance, Dr. "What's Hot," you promised a chime about how A-I is spoiling the Earth. Lend an ear.

Thanks to Stephen Witt, writing in *The New Yorker* ("Information Overload," November 3, 2025, pp. 20-25), we now have an idea of how much this revolutionary new way of handling information will cost the Earth. Chatbots, left unchecked, have the potential to exacerbate the heat wave that is already engulfing our only home, potentially ruining the atmosphere for a very long time to come.

These data centers are not small-ticket items. Witt wrote that President Donald Trump has made the construction of data centers a national priority.

However, not all of us, or our children, will get a ticket to Mars with Elon Musk.

According to Mr. Witt, author of *The Thinking Machine*, a history of Nvidia, who visited China and found that "robots are everywhere. I saw them stocking shelves and

*Either way, at the rate that the biggest capitalist juggernauts of our time (did I hear Amazon, et al.?) are building power plants to manufacture energy that will power these monstrosities, the Earth loses.*

cleaning floors at a mall. When I ordered food to my hotel room, it was delivered by a two-foot-tall, wheeled robot in the shape of a garbage can, with the voice of a child."

Otherwise, and more to the point, I suppose, these companies are planning to buy up "quality" content on the Internet, such as ebook texts, disregarding the majority of content, which is regarded as junk. For the upscale content (I have several books on the Net), the day may come when Nvidia and its kind will be out buying copyrights as bots learn how to replicate themselves. Some of these data centers cover an area equivalent to about 20 football fields.

All of this is about to hit a data center near you, probably fueled by fossil and nuclear fuels. So far, this brave new world



## Peace Seeking in Nebraska:

### Before NFP and By NFP Since 1970

by Paul A. Olson

*"[W]e will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." – Martin Luther King*

The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries Up to World War II: To begin with our search for peace, nineteenth century Nebraska had significant settlements of Quakers, Mennonites, and the various Brethren churches whose whole tradition was that of a culture of peace. The 1890s-1900s Populist Party, which elected a number of officials in Nebraska, had a powerful anti-war strand, and though for the most part its members supported the Spanish-American War, Nebraska legislators, perhaps basing their sentiment on Populist tradition, voted the subsequent early twentieth century Philippine-American war to be colonialist. There existed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a Nebraska anti-war sentiment crystallized by William Jennings Bryan and Senator George Norris in their public careers, and represented in Bryan's pacifism and Norris's trust in international law, two legs in most peace movements and certainly in NFP.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*  
– Margaret Mead

*Look for the next installment of this series in 2026.*

## What's HOT, conclusion

is looking like the old world, where, according to Witt, "Data centers are beginning to put intense pressure on America's electricity grid." The sole functioning reactor at Three Mile Island was acquired for use as a data center but was closed down in 2019 as it proved unviable. However, plans are underway to reopen it in 2027 as the Crane Clean Energy Center, Witt wrote. Farmland is being acquired for the construction of more data centers.

"American utilities sought almost thirty billion dollars in retail rate increases in the first half of 2025," wrote Witt. Vast amounts of new "waste" carbon dioxide will soon be pumped into the existing overload, accelerating the already accelerating rise of the carbon dioxide curve that is distorting our weather. Sales of ordinary farmland are being quoted, according to Witt, at more than a million dollars an acre.

Top-grade topsoil is being stripped away to make room for a carpet of data centers. After all, who needs corn when we have data, especially data that is produced by carbon dioxide emissions?

The favored fuels for data centers at present are natural gas and coal, including a huge gas reservoir in Appalachia called the Marcellus Shale, as well as coal deposits that are being reopened. This is because countries in the Middle East and China are also opening "enormous" data centers, Witt wrote. The data centers are set up to work 24 hours a day, producing as much as four million pounds of carbon dioxide every hour, "about the same as 4 million idling cars," wrote Witt.

So there you have it: new data from fossil fuels. As for Donald Trump, the use

## Justice, conclusion

Paul Olson, emeritus professor English at UNL, is one of the guiding lights for the project who co-wrote the introduction with Mays. "Take the burden of history and try to set it right," he urged.

The book was edited by Kevin Abourezk, a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe and managing editor of Indian Country Today. He co-wrote the chapter on Native Americans. Other authors are Gabriel Bruguier, Preston Love Jr., Ness Sandoval, Heather Fryer, Sharon Ishi-Jordan, Emira Ibrahimpašić and Julia Reilly. A preliminary bibliography, also available on UNL Digital Commons, was researched by Veronica Duran, Kathleen Johnson and Crystal Dunning. Most of the authors have lived this history, or are part of families that are rooted in it.

To learn more about the project and order copies of the book, visit: [rootsofjustice.ne.gov](https://rootsofjustice.ne.gov).

To order an on-demand print copy: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/170/>

of the phrase "climate change" has been strictly forbidden in government communication. The very idea has been exiled from discussion, as if all those scientists who have compiled a record proving its veracity have vanished. "1984" has arrived in the White House.

It all brings to mind a verse from an old Bob Dylan song: "There's something going on here, but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?"

*Bruce E. Johansen has written and published several books on this climate change during the past 25 years, the most recent of which is Nationalism vs. Nature: Warming and War, from Springer publishers in Frankfurt, Germany.*

# *Because the system isn't broken, continued*

(1791), which protects property from government seizure—but doesn't protect people from being treated as property—was reinforced by the Supreme Court in *Fletcher v. Peck* (1810) and *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (1819), which upheld property-first ideologies.

Step 2: **Give yourself exclusive access to land.** Acquire territory through “purchase,” war, treaties written in disappearing ink, and legal jargon the original owners couldn't read.

Step 3: **Build generational wealth** through plantations, slave labor, debt schemes, land speculation, inheritance networks, political insider influence, and create a judiciary to defend wealth over humanity. *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) created judicial review and was soon used to protect **corporations, contracts, and property rights** far more aggressively than human rights.

Step 4: **Write laws that make your wealth untouchable:** Design contracts as sacred scripture so that property becomes holy, Corporations become people, and People become property. **Hamilton's Assumption Plan (1790)** created a national debt market that enriched speculators who bought up war IOUs cheaply from veterans. Plantation elites monopolized cash crops with enslaved labor protected under the law. Because under a government that worships wealth. In God We Trust on the dollar bill is precisely where it belongs.

Step 5: **Create a court system that protects wealth first, humanity second.** Make the judiciary the bodyguard of property, make the Constitution the armor of the elite. By the late 19th century, the Court used the **14th Amendment**—originally meant to protect formerly enslaved people—to protect **corporations** far more frequently.

And finally:

Step 6: **Guarantee only your class can govern:** The **Electoral College** was designed to dilute popular vote power and protect slave states. Only landowners can vote, only wealthy white men can serve, and **only elites can interpret the law they wrote for themselves.** The Constitution intentionally slows democratic action through bicameralism, veto power, and lifetime judicial appointments. At the same time, the U.S. Senate structure gives small states equal power with massive states, so there is genuinely no majority rule.

*“The Constitution was written by men who never had me in mind.”*

— Frederick Douglass

This isn't a conspiracy. This is **American history**. They built a system that preserves minority rule, resists redistribution, frustrates reform, elevates courts over communities, and protects the wealthy from democracy's reach. And for 237 years, that system has worked exactly as intended.

The Constitution is not broken. It is functioning with terrifying accuracy. The Constitution started this country off with the bar of democracy and equality **in hell** and has left us fighting to ascend from its circles for centuries, with the aftermath of nationwide and global trauma that is visible in every corner of not only this country but every country it touches. **Racial wealth gap?** Inherited from slavery, maintained by policy such as the **Homestead Act exclusions (1862)**, the **FHA redlining (1934)**, and the **GI Bill racial discrimination (1944)**.

**Overpowered police state?** Descendant of slave patrols and Indian Removal militias, **Slave Patrol Laws (1700s–1800s)** are the basis for modern policing.

**Black Codes (1865–1866)** criminalized Black existence after emancipation. **War on Drugs (1971–now)** disproportionately targeted Black communities.

**Eviction court, predatory landlords?** Built on the sanctity of property over humanity. Landlord-tenant law descended from English feudal property structures retained in U.S. common law. Modern eviction policies reflect property priority baked into the Constitution.

**Voting barriers and minority rule?** Built into the bones of the Electoral College and Senate: **Poll taxes** (legal until 1966), **Grandfather clauses**, **Jim Crow literacy tests**, **Shelby County v. Holder (2013)** gutted the Voting Rights Act's protections.

**Generational poverty in Black and Indigenous communities?** Engineered outcomes of policies that never included us. **Indian Removal Act (1830)**, **Trail of Tears (1838)**. **The Dawes Act (1887)** carved up tribal lands for white settlement.

**America isn't failing.**

It's succeeding at the exact thing it was built to do: to protect the wealthy and the powerful from accountability, and to do so on the backs of the othered. Please understand that I do not believe the Constitution is a moral document. The Constitution governs my material life, but it does not govern my humanity, and it holds no inherent claim on my soul, dignity, or humanity. I have no faith in a document that purports to define whether I deserve to be treated as living, breathing, being worthy of rights or respect. I believe we need a new document. One that doesn't start us off in the depths of demonic musings of liars, rapists, and thieves. **We The People**, deserve a constitution that acknowledges the humanity of all from its onset, so we can dream and achieve higher heights of equity and collaboration across false demographic



**Op-ed: We're Omaha Catholics.**

# **Here's why we oppose AG Hilgers' lawsuit against OPPD**

*by Dan DiLeo, Jeanne Schuler, Patrick Murray, and Perlie Whitley*

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On Oct. 9, Attorney General Mike Hilgers sued OPPD to block the utility's plan to transition its North Omaha Station from burning coal.

The lawsuit, supported by Gov. Jim Pillen, says OPPD:

- 1) Should ignore social and environmental costs of energy.
- 2) And should ignore "environmental justice," the idea that marginalized communities should not bear greater burdens of ecological harm.

The Catholic Church, to which we, Hilgers, Pillen, and 450,000 other Nebraskans belong, says the opposite.

Many non-Catholics affirm Church teachings as common-sense ways to protect human dignity and life, especially among the poor.

The Catholic Church recognizes that pollution violates human rights to dignity and life. This is particularly true for the marginalized, who usually contribute least to ecological harm and whom Christians are especially called to love.

In 1989, St. John Paul II affirmed that every person has a "right to a safe environment." In 1993, the U.S. Catholic bishops established their Environmental Justice Program to protect this right, above all among the marginalized.

To achieve environmental justice, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized, "When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed environmentally and socially—as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred."

He continued, "It is not hard to see that

environmental degradation is often due to the lack of far-sighted official policies or to the pursuit of myopic economic interests, which then, tragically, become a serious threat to creation."

Hilgers' lawsuit is an example of such tragic policy.

Study after study shows coal pollution,

drivers of any likely rate increases is corporate entities demanding more energy, especially Google and Meta data centers.

*The Washington Post* notes, "Meta's Nebraska data center alone used nearly as much energy as the North Omaha coal units produced in 2023." That year, Meta revenue was \$134 billion.

***In Dilexi Te: On Love for the Poor, ironically published the day Hilgers sued OPPD, Pope Leo XIV stressed the ancient Judeo-Christian principle that wealth should not come at the expense of the poor.***

even at levels allowed by current regulations, causes higher rates of asthma, heart attack, stroke, neurological damage, and premature death. These cost human dignity and lives. They also cost money through higher rates of medical treatment. Hilgers and Pillen ignore these costs.

Hilgers claims data shows that the plant does not harm local air quality. He ignores that the closest EPA monitor of coal pollution in Omaha does not measure air surrounding the plant—it's five miles away at 4102 Woolworth Ave.

In Omaha, the poor and people of color are especially vulnerable to the health impacts of coal pollution. Historic redlining housing policies segregated these demographics closer to the coal plant.

Hilgers warns that financial energy costs will rise if the North Omaha Station transitions from coal. He omits that one of the primary

Environmental justice stresses those who cause a problem and have the most resources should fund solutions—not pass social, environmental, and economic costs on to the most vulnerable, who contribute least.

Rewiring America concludes that home investments in heat pumps, rooftop solar, batteries, and efficiencies that lower energy bills "could offset all new projected data center energy demand."

In *Dilexi Te: On Love for the Poor*, ironically published the day Hilgers sued OPPD, Pope Leo XIV stressed the ancient Judeo-Christian principle that wealth should not come at the expense of the poor.

*Dan DiLeo, Jeanne Schuler, and Patrick Murray are members of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in North Omaha; Perlie Whitley is a member of St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church in North Omaha.*

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## *Because the system isn't broken, conclusion*

boundaries instead of constantly fighting not to be dragged back to hell.

And we have that opportunity unwittingly before us now, thanks to the current political climate. The same Constitution that locked us out also holds one dangerous key:

**Article V**, the mechanism for a constitutional convention. Right now, states across the country are submitting applications that could trigger a complete rewrite of the Constitution for the first time since 1787. Dozens of states have passed **active Article V applications**, many backed by: Convention of States, Balanced Budget Amendment Task Force, U.S. Term Limits.

This is not hypothetical—it is happening **now**, in real legislative chambers.

This is not a drill.

Article V Convention is risky, unpredictable, unprecedented, and absolutely transformational. Yes, it could open the door to dismantling voting rights, weakening civil rights, expanding presidential power, and entrenching minority rule. But—and this is important—if democratic, multiracial and gendered coalitions are present it could also open the door to rewriting the social contract, embedding gender equality, guaranteeing reproductive freedom, building a fundamental right to vote, redefining policing, protecting Indigenous sovereignty, creating a multiracial, inclusive democracy for the first time, shifting the center of power from elites to people.

**This is the danger and the possibility.**

Because when the descendants of the excluded get a pen in their hand, the Constitution stops being a weapon and becomes a promise.

**And so I say: the system isn't broken.**

But it's calling our bluff.

America is asking us if we're ready to write a new story—or keep living inside the master plan of the OG Robber Barons. The question is, do we want to keep living inside their design? Or do we write a new one?

All Power to All People.