



*Nebraskans for Peace*

# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

MAY / JUNE 2021 VOLUME 49, NO. 3

## Amid Widespread Disease, Death and Poverty, Major World Powers Increased Their Military Spending in 2020

To pay for their bold infrastructure, climate action and social justice initiatives, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris are proposing raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy. But, as the adjacent article points out, the bloated Pentagon budget is another source of funds...

*by Lawrence Wittner  
Professor Emeritus of History. SUNY/  
Albany and former Peace Action  
National Board Member*

Last year was a terrible time for vast numbers of people around the globe, who experienced not only a terrible disease pandemic, accompanied by widespread sickness and death, but severe economic hardship.

Even so, the disasters of 2020 were not shocking enough to jolt the world's most powerful nations out of their traditional preoccupation with enhancing their armed might, for once again they raised their military spending to new heights.

During 2020, world military expenditures increased to \$1,981,000,000,000—or nearly \$2 trillion—with the outlays of the three leading military powers playing a major

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*Nebraskans for Peace's state office in Lincoln is located on land that formerly belonged to the Otoe Tribe.*

## Nebraska Report

The Nebraska Report is published six times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

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Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month's issue. Submit to: Nebraska Report, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, P.O. Box 83466, Lincoln, NE 68501-3466.

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

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part in the growth. The U.S. government increased its military spending from \$732 billion in 2019 to \$778 billion in 2020, thus retaining its top spot among the biggest funders of war preparations. Meanwhile, the Chinese government hiked its military spending to \$252 billion, while the Russian government raised its military outlay to \$61.7 billion.

As a result, the U.S. government remained by far the most lavish spender on the military in the world, accounting for 39 percent of the global total. Even so, the Chinese government continued its steady role in the worldwide military buildup, with its military disbursements rising for the 26th consecutive year. Indeed, China's 76 percent increase in military spending between 2011 and 2020 was the largest among the world's top 15 big spenders. When added together, the 2020 military expen-

***In 2020, the U.S. government remained by far the most lavish spender on the military in the world, accounting for 39 percent of the global total.***

ditures of the United States, China, and Russia accounted for 55 percent of the global total.

This upward spiral in military spending coincided with a sharp rise in the number of the world's people living in poverty, which soared by an estimated 131 million to 803 million by the end of the year.

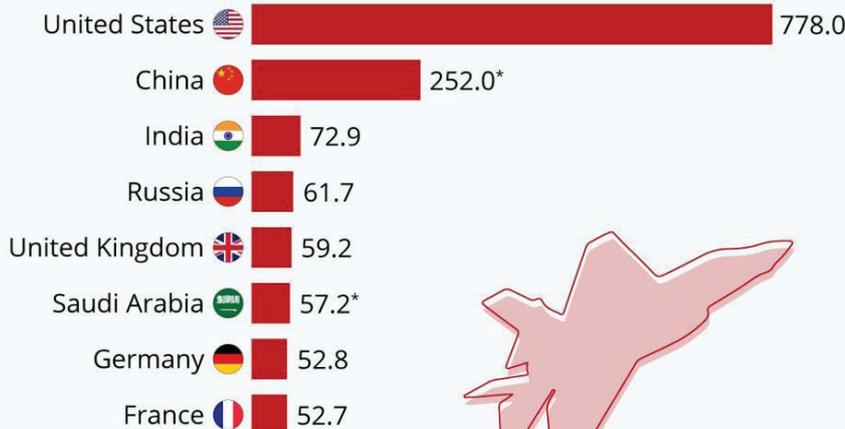
In the United States, the richest nation in the world, 2020 produced the largest increase in poverty since the U.S. government began tracking it in 1960. By the end of the year, an estimated 50 million people were struggling with hunger, including 17 million children. Plunged into severe privation, vast numbers of Americans lined up, sometimes in caravans that stretched for miles, to obtain free food at private and public food pantries and other distribution centers. Ignoring the terrible human costs of the economic crisis plaguing the nation during his re-election campaign, President Donald Trump boasted instead of his administration's "colossal" increase in military spending.

In Russia, where real incomes fell for five of the previous seven years, they dropped still further in 2020. In that year, the average Russian had 11 percent less to spend than in 2013. Indeed, during the first nine months of 2020, as poverty grew, an estimated 19.6 million Russians reportedly lived below the poverty line, equivalent to 13.3 percent of the population. According to a leading economist at Russia's Institute of International Finance, the authorities "were so concerned about their external threats that they completely forgot about the domestic population."

The situation was apparently quite different in China. Thanks to the government's successful efforts to limit the spread of Covid-19, the Chinese economy had an easier time

# The Countries With The Highest Military Expenditure

Total military expenditure by country in 2020  
(in billion U.S. dollars)



\* Estimate  
Source: Sipri



Forbes **statista**

The existence of widespread poverty in the world's mightiest military powers raises the question of what could have been done to alleviate or eliminate it if, during 2020, they had not poured nearly \$1.1 trillion into preparations for war.

Also, of course, the vast resources used for the military buildup could have bankrolled other programs that would have substantially improved the lives of their citizens. In the United States, as the National Priorities Project noted, the military budget could have funded healthcare for 208 million adults, or 21 million scholarships for university students, or 84 million public housing units, or the employment of 9.2 million elementary school teachers, or 10 million clean energy jobs, or VA medical care for 72 million military veterans.

But, sadly, building the mightiest military forces in world history had greater appeal to the governments of the United States, China, and Russia. Perhaps, someday, people will ask whether increasing preparations for war by these nations—mostly designed to destroy one another—was the best these governments could do as their populations sank into widespread disease, death, and poverty.

*In the United States, the richest nation in the world, 2020 produced the largest increase in poverty since the U.S. government began tracking it in 1960.*

of it in 2020 than did the economies of other major nations. This factor, plus four decades of rapid economic growth and an ongoing campaign to improve the government's popularity by reducing the country's worst poverty, led to the Communist Party's announcement that November that President Xi Jinping and the party had accomplished the miracle of eliminating severe poverty in China.

But all was not as it seemed. In

2020, China, despite its Communist pretensions, had one of the largest gaps between rich and poor throughout the world. By October, its number of billionaires had soared to 878, the highest total in any nation. In contrast, as a *New York Times* article reported that month, "millions of people on low incomes are working fewer hours at lower pay, depleting savings, and taking out loans to survive." Moreover, claims as to the eradication of poverty in China were dubious, for the official poverty measuring line there was much lower than in nations with a similar level of economic development.

A Brookings Institution economist pointed out that, if China used the same standard as other upper middle-income countries, between 80 and 90 percent of its population would be considered poor. "Even if you aren't out of poverty, the country will say you're out of poverty," remarked a bitter Chinese farmer. "That's the way it is."

*The existence of widespread poverty in the world's mightiest military powers raises the question of what could have been done to alleviate or eliminate it if, during 2020, they had not poured nearly \$1.1 trillion into preparations for war.*

# The Dead Are Arising

## THE LIFE OF MALCOLM X

Reviewed by John Krejci

Over the past decade, the mantra of “Black Lives Matter” has arisen in response to a raft of race-related killings of African Americans, often at the hands of law enforcement. Black Lives Matter continues a storied tradition of African American affirmation movements dating back generations. Up until his assassination in 1965, Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little in Omaha in 1925) was preaching ‘Black Pride’. His father, Earl, had spent his own life promoting Marcus Garvey’s Black solidarity and “Back-to-Africa” movement half a century prior to that. It’s no wonder that even today Black Lives Matter instills fear in many White and White supremacy groups. And the name Malcolm X still engenders discomfort, fear and sometimes hatred to the present day. The five-part 1959 documentary “The Hate That Hate Produced” hosted by Mike Wallace is still cited to highlight the impact of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam.

In addition to Malcolm’s own autobiography, a new biographical work, *The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X*, gives the historical context to Malcolm’s, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s and White racists’ actions in 20th century America. The somewhat baffling title refers to the fact that many Black people are ‘dead’ to pride and awareness of their worth and are hindered by the self-hatred that White society has instilled in them. Lead author Les Payne was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, who carried out research for 30 years

until his death in 2018. His daughter and chief researcher, Tamera Payne, published the work in 2020.

I taught *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* to Nebraska college students in the 1970s. That work, told by Alex Haley, was both insightful and inspiring. *The Dead are Arising*, however, chronicles

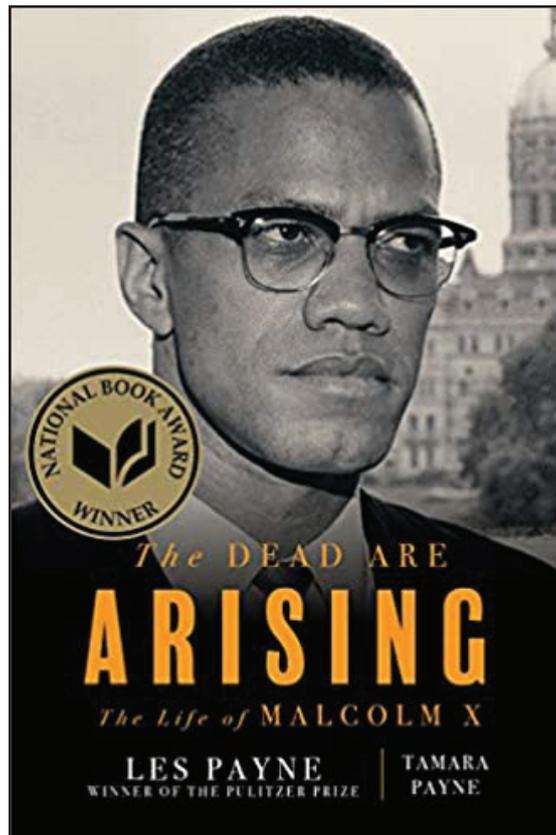
The book describes the involvement of J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI, the KKK, Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam and police informants as well as living friends and members of Malcolm’s family.

Malcolm’s charismatic gifts of oratory, his ability to spellbind audiences and recruit new members to the Nation of Islam were so successful that Elijah Mohammad, the supreme leader of the Nation of Islam, became insanely jealous. It was no secret that the philandering and hypocritical head of the Nation of Islam wanted to eliminate Malcolm despite Malcolm’s success and unquestioning loyalty to this so-called “Messenger of Allah”. Even after Malcolm learned of the seven illegitimate children Elijah had fathered with his secretaries, he remained loyal. This is one part of Malcolm’s personality that is difficult to understand.

Two laudable traits of Malcolm do stand out. He was fearless in the face of death. His house was firebombed at night. He survived numerous death threats and plots hatched by the Nation of Islam. These became more intense after Malcolm eventually revealed the sexual infidelities and lavish lifestyle of Elijah. Malcolm, by his own admission, could hardly believe that he had blinded himself to these transgressions for so long.

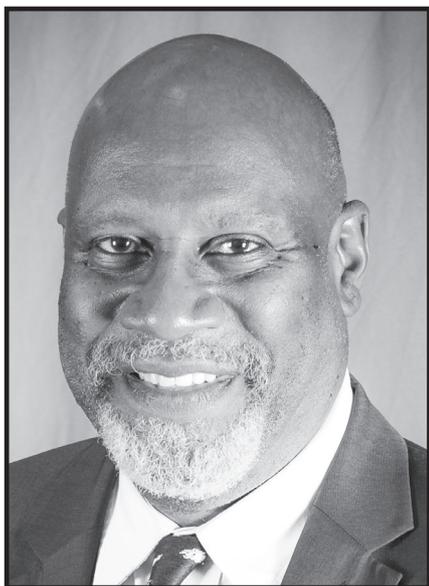
Beside the Nation of Islam, Malcolm was spied upon and plotted against by J. Edgar Hoover, the CIA and local law enforcement.

The second admirable trait of character was Malcolm’s several conversions. Payne follows Malcolm’s exploits as a petty criminal in Boston and Harlem in the 1930s and early 1940s to his religious



not only the life of Malcolm, but relates the broad context of the Civil Rights Movement. It describes in detail the 1919 insurrection in Omaha—the riot, and lynching of an innocent Black man. It includes the threat to hang the mayor, who tried to protect him, and the burning of the courthouse. (It was hard not to see parallels with the recent insurrection at the National Capitol this past January!)

# The Scourge of White Privilege



***A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon***

I recently participated in an antiracism book-reading group on Facebook. Based upon the physical descriptions I could see on the screen, there were no African American or people of color participants. How is that possible when the group's focus is primarily on Black/White relations? Can there be meaningful outcome from such one-sided, non-representative discussions?

When we were developing the "Omaha Table Talk" program about 15 years ago, we actively debated whether Whites can have effective race or anti-racism discussions (and gain anything tangible) without people of color in the room. I remember too that while I was at Catholic Charities, we had an interracial book-reading group centered around Paul Kivel's *Uprooting Racism*. We asked the Whites to discuss some racial topics in their racial group, and then we brought both groups together. The total size of this group might have been about ten individuals, with the Whites slightly outnumbering the African Americans six to four. I don't recall anything significant

from that book discussion, except for one White guy from Creighton University who cited classic examples of racism that he'd personally observed. In none of these incidents, though, did he push back or challenge what was happening. When I questioned him about his inaction, he became very defensive and felt I was attacking him. He was suffering from "White Fragility" before Robin DiAngelo invented the term and started making big bucks off selling antiracism to White corporations that still practice overt racism.

As a first-time visitor to this Facebook group, I was a bit surprised that one of the participants asked me to comment on his long-winded story on what amounted to 'guilt sharing'. I was authentically impressed with how the group allowed me to just 'pop in' without being mean. However, I found myself instinctively trying to act as a facilitator when watching how they were conducting this event. There was some creative energy from the participants that I wanted more Whites to be able to glean from their efforts. These types of group discussions on race are not a finished product. But, that said, they're a good start.

At the risk of speaking out of school, one of my colleagues, a Chicano, who has an intense dislike for White Liberals, told me a couple of months ago that when Whites do 'race work' or talk about racial situations, they invariably do so from a sense of guilt... Or by trying to make themselves look good. He went on to say that he could only think of a handful of Whites who have seriously challenged racism during his lifetime, and those few were coming from a religious framework or mindset. We are both in our 60s and have years of antiracism and race equity work under our belts, and I admit to having been somewhat surprised by his stark, take-no-prisoners assessment. His comments were still on my mind when, the following week, I asked a university

official to write a national race-focused proposal for an extended grant on race relations. She though wanted to focus instead on housing integration in another country. It was painful to listen to her strained justification of how that country's efforts could reduce racism in our immediate state and nation. What I was witnessing—just as my Chicano colleague described—was yet another example of the 'bait and switch' that White liberals do to avoid confronting their own racism in their own spaces.

Some years ago, I made a conscious decision not to participate during my free time in groups or coalitions where I would be the only person of color. It's one thing to have to deal with being the only African American in the room when earning a living for yourself and your loved ones. Why though would any sane, normal person voluntarily subject themselves to being a so-called 'minority' around many race-insensitive Whites who are not fighting the good fight? Most White people who enjoy the benefits of White Privilege have no clue how challenging it is to be the 'only one' in their midst. To be exposed to micro-aggressive comments and Whites caucusing and talking in private and then snaking into the room as if they had not had their pre-conversations is traumatizing for a solitary person of color. It's absolutely guaranteed to make you feel the 'outsider', alienated.

Malcolm X once noted that Black people wonder why our White god does not hear our prayers... Maybe, he suggested, it's because we're praying to the wrong god. We're seeking admission where we're not welcome. We only need to apply that same reverse engineering to figure out that the unjust conditions African Americans and other oppressed folks face did not materialize overnight,

*conclusion on page 6*

# White Privilege, conclusion

but were the result of generations of systematic denigration reflected in our brainwashing education, our wildly disproportionate conviction and incarceration rates, and our premature deaths from an environment that adamantly refuses to acknowledge that “Black Lives Matter”. To then have racist police officers and their surrogates hijack our narrative and alternatively assert that ‘All Lives Matter’ is the height of effrontery. Can you imagine the reactions of African

curtail racism, Whites must get to know their non-White neighbors. Only then can they develop guidelines with matrices to measure their efforts.

This all puts me in mind of all the so-called ‘social advocacy’ organizations in Nebraska. Well-meaning as they are, they are predominantly staffed and led by Whites waging their struggles from inside their White segregated offices. They have no regular contact with people of color in Nebraska or African

you have challenged racism in the past year?

2. Do you have networks in local or state government where the workers or committees are paid with public dollars and you have questioned the apartheid nature of that environment?
3. What examples can you provide from your diversity efforts that have produced evidence-based, demonstrable outcomes?

I learned years ago when doing race dialogues and conversations to be as clear and frank as possible. As the old saying goes, “Frank talk does not break the friendship.” Yet, what I have repeatedly found to be a primary stumbling block for many otherwise good-hearted Whites is an unwillingness to acknowledge the reality of White Privilege: the unearned wealth, advantages and favoritism accruing from a legacy of slavery and segregation, exploitation and land grabs that have kept Blacks in their place and Whites in a higher space.

If we are truly serious about transforming the wretched conditions for African Americans and others locked out of the American Dream, money is going to have to change hands. Simply having a bunch of White folks read a book or watch a video about race is not going to realign a rigged social structure. Getting to know your non-White neighbor won’t rectify an economic system that for centuries relied upon outright slavery and then the ruthless exploitation of cheap labor to build billion-dollar institutions and personal fortunes. Unless we are talking about providing reparations or making whole people who have been historically traumatized by American Democracy, all of our well-intended conversations will not lead anywhere. Until as a nation we openly acknowledge the economic benefits of White Privilege—and begin paying damages for the harm it’s caused—America will continue to have a ‘race problem’ and no amount of talk will fix it.

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Americans hearing ‘All Lives Matter’ after centuries of targeted oppression based strictly on skin color? Tell that to the thousands of lynched Black victims whose grotesque and grisly murders went unsolved and unatoned by a legal system that protected the perpetrators.

Some Whites have temporarily experienced being a ‘minority’ when they’ve become lost in certain parts of town or neighborhoods. However, because of the historical and cultural legacy of slavery, “Jim Crow” laws, and institutional White Privilege, most Whites in America have never really experienced what it’s like to continually be a ‘minority’ in this country. If White people are serious about antiracism, they must first hear one-on-one what people of color have to share from their experience. Reading books is helpful. But there’s no substitute for personal connection. To

Americans suffering for decades in this apartheid state, and accordingly they have no explicit or empirical benchmarks for working with these communities of color. This goes for ACLU Nebraska, Voices for Children, Nebraska Appleseed Center, Legal Aid of Nebraska and even Nebraskans for Peace where the Whites outnumber the one or two (or even no people of color) working on their staffs.

Some months ago, I asked my four white friends (down from seven) to name three things that they’re most proud of dealing with antiracism. It was surprising that one of them came up with six items off the top of her head. Another could only name one where she co-wrote an article with me about three years ago or more. That became my moment of being woke about racists and White folks. I only ask three simple questions:

1. Can you name three examples where

# PLEDGE TO EAT LESS MEAT

Eating meat three times a day (bacon or sausage for breakfast; a hamburger or cold cuts for lunch; and beef or pork or chicken for dinner) is so commonplace in America we don't give it a second's thought. Meat is such a standard fixture of our diet that what stands out is when we actually go a meal without it. (And then, we tend to go heavy on the dairy or eggs.)

For much of the world's population though—which of necessity eats a largely plant-based diet just to be able to feed itself—meat is a luxury. Most people on earth simply can't afford to eat this high on the food chain. Where the average American eats a whopping 222 pounds of meat a year, the average citizen of Rwanda eats 22 pounds—one tenth of what we in the U.S. annually consume... The equivalent roughly of 'Meat Once a Week'.

Culturally, meat-eating is a status symbol: The richer the country, the more meat we eat. But in a world of rampant population growth, ever-diminishing resources and worsening climate disruption, meat is set to

become a scarce commodity. In the years ahead, the supply simply won't be there.

The problems with a meat-centered diet, though, run deeper than availability.

Meat production is one of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. From the grain grown for feed... to the mass cruelty of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs)... to the worldwide marketing and distribution, meat-eating has a GHG 'foodprint' almost twice that of a plant-based diet.\* If humanity has any hope of reaching the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change target of slashing global GHG emissions IN HALF by 2030 (an almost unimaginable average reduction of 7.6 percent a year each of the next ten years), we will have to drastically reduce our personal consumption—including the way we eat. And as Americans have the highest per capita emission levels of anyone on the planet, we're the ones who will have to make the biggest shift in our lifestyles... From those with the most is the most required.

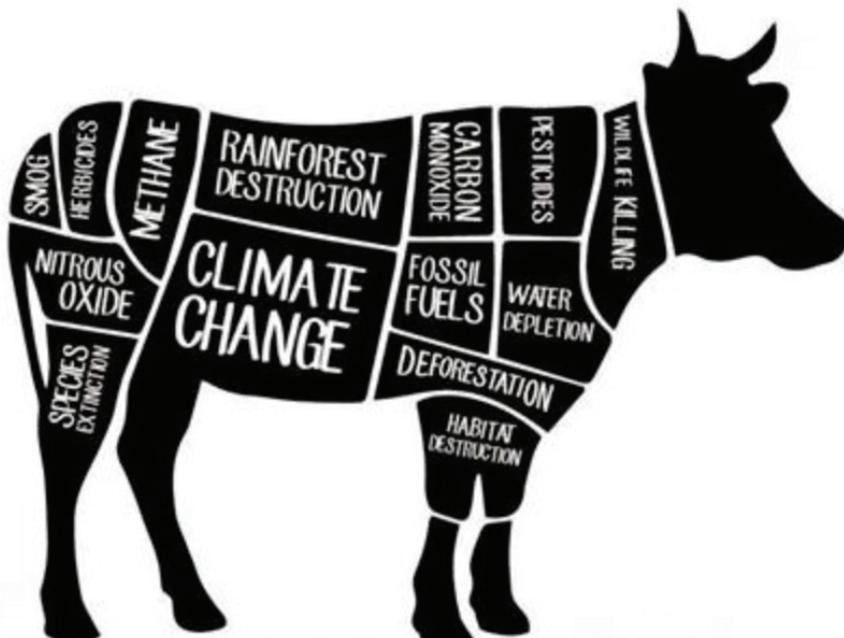
Reducing our meat consumption, however, is about more than adjusting to an imminent scarcity of supply and cutting our GHG emissions... It's about fairness and a just allocation of resources. So that every human on the planet can have access to some meat protein in their diet, those of us with an abundance have got to fare with less. How much less? The World Resources Institute has calculated that meat consumption per person worldwide needs to be limited to the equivalent of one-and-a-half hamburgers per week... Basically, 'Meat Once a Week'.

With each of us eating meat just once a week:

- Farmers and ranchers raising grass-fed cattle can keep supplying our dairy and beef...
- Our over-taxed ecosystem will have a desperately needed opportunity to regenerate...
- Greenhouse gas emissions levels can begin to drop...
- Global temperatures may just be able to stay below the 1.5-degree C. threshold... and
- Everyone on the planet will get enough meat and dairy in their diet for good health.

**Pledge To Eat Less Meat.** Starting today, skip having meat with breakfast and, meal by meal, begin shifting to a more plant-based diet. Spend more time in the kitchen cooking, eating vegetarian (using dairy and eggs)... and even eating vegan (no dairy or eggs). In every dimension of your life, begin practicing simplicity—living more simply, so that others can simply live.

*\*BBC Science Focus Magazine (1/5/2020)  
<https://www.sciencefocus.com/planet-earth/how-to-reduce-your-carbon-footprint-for-next-to-nothing/>*



# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

## Energy and Environment: Some Tough Questions

We have entered the climate-change 'pledge' season once again. The president of the United States has pledged to cut U.S.'s emissions of greenhouse gases by half compared to 2005 levels by the end of 2030. The good news is that we now have a commander-in-chief who knows something about climate science and is conscious enough of the effects of greenhouse gas emissions to advance a plan that may reduce them significantly. We would not have had

ing Kyoto in 1992 and Paris in 2015. (The U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and Trump of course pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement.) Overall, talk about breaking the upward curve of greenhouse gases has had an effect, but a small one, in the United States and the European Union.

The extremely bad news is that China eclipsed the U.S.'s emissions in 2014, and kept on running, doubling them by 2020. You read that correctly: China added enough greenhouse gases

Even with China's prodigious appetite for fossil fuels, the United States still uses much more per capita. The Chinese used 10.1 tons of greenhouse gases per person in 2019, while U.S. citizens used 17.6 tons per capita. The European Union used 7.4 tons per capita, and India 2.5. What ought to be obvious from such numbers is that no one is going to win any kind of climate change battle against greenhouse gases without China's full-throated co-operation.



such an experience seven months ago, when the official line emanating from the White House was that coal was good for us—and any whisper otherwise was a tree-hugging, hippie hoax. With Joe Biden, climate-wise, The United States is back in the game.

The other news is that a 'pledge' isn't a reality. Not yet, at any rate. The United States and other countries have signed plenty of these pledges, includ-

to create a whole new country that spews more effluent than any other in six years, as the United States and the European Union's effluent was slowly falling. This was occurring as China also was becoming the world's largest producer and exporter of wind turbines and solar panels. China also remains the world's largest user of coal (the dirtiest of fossil fuels). It isn't alone. The World Energy Agency projects that annual use of coal will increase 4.5 percent in 2021, mainly because of increasing demand for electricity.

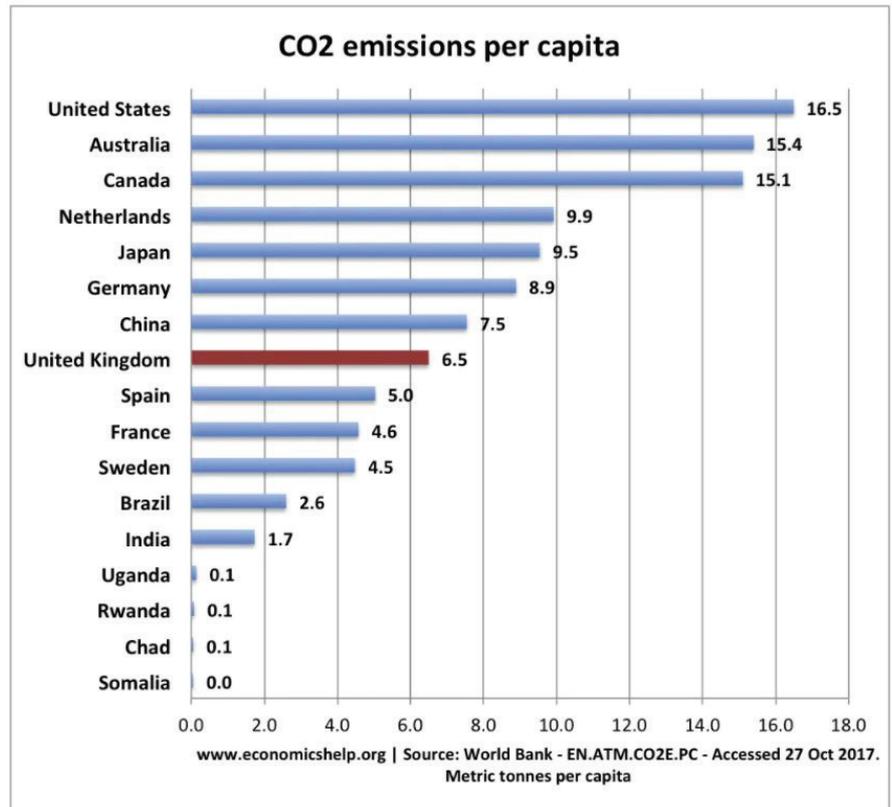
The same goes for many other countries that we have not even mentioned yet: Bangladesh, Australia, Japan, Canada, Russia, India, Indonesia, all of Africa. Some of these countries have sizable populations (India: 1.3 billion; Indonesia: 320 million; Bangladesh: 160 million; Nigeria: 140 million). Most of these are flooded with people who want only what most of us take for granted: enough food to survive; a small house, with electricity; a car, small truck or motorbike, perhaps, and a tank of gasoline.

*Even with China's prodigious appetite for fossil fuels, the United States still uses much more per capita. The Chinese used 10.1 tons of greenhouse gases per person in 2019, while U.S. citizens used 17.6 tons per capita.*

Many of these people live in the tropics, with hot, humid summers, where air conditioning would be very nice, but at present is an unaffordable luxury. Anyone who has lived through a New Delhi pre-monsoon summer knows what I mean. To reduce worldwide emissions, are we, in Nebraska, going to give up our summer air conditioning? Or... are all of us going to find new ways to supply electricity from renewable resources, such as sun and wind, rather than dirty coal? Our Omaha Public Power District is already moving off of coal and into sun and wind, to a limited extent.

Trump liked the sound of “clean coal”, but it is an oxymoron and a joke. Just look at the type of physical infrastructure that is required for such a thing as ‘carbon capture’ and try to tell me that it isn’t expensive. President Biden’s plans contain some items that will call for Herculean efforts: by 2030, for example, two-thirds of cars and SUVs would be battery operated, up from 2 percent today.

So, back to President Biden’s pledge: More than half of our new cars, trucks, and SUVs would have to be powered by electricity. Whenever you see that magic wand, ask where the electricity comes from. We do not yet have enough electric power produced

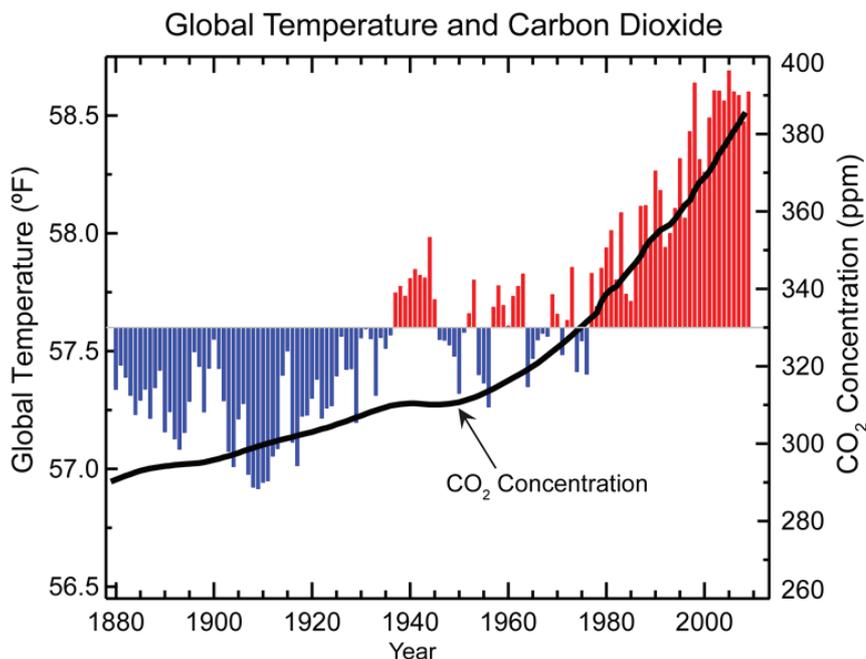


by wind and solar power to make a dent in demand if oil-based gasoline is eliminated. To do that enormously good deed, we will need new infrastructure, probably funded at least in part by Uncle Sam (or ‘Uncle Joe’?). How many Republicans will vote to pass

that? Shall we ask Mitch McConnell? How much will summer temperatures have to climb, how strong will hurricanes need to get, and how high must sea levels rise to convince Republicans that we’ve got a real problem?

The United States already has shed 21 percent of its greenhouse-gas emissions since 2005. Hooray for us (until, that is, we realize that one third of that is due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Now friends, a show of hands: How many of us would favor 570,000 agonizing deaths in 16 months to help meet our pledged greenhouse-gas- emissions target? Surely, we can find a less painful way to do this. All of us need to have more than a serious conversation. We need to produce solid results—and quickly.

*Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, is author of Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions (2017).*



# SOLVE CLIMATE BY 2030

*NFP State Coordinator Tim Rinne was invited to participate in an April 7 online panel hosted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Environmental Studies Program in partnership with Bard College's "Solve Climate by 2030" educational campaign. Printed below are his remarks to the largely undergraduate audience.*

I want to thank you all for joining this **"Solve Climate by 2030"** webinar... for—as you well know—there's no more urgent issue facing us than the climate crisis, and this isn't an easy subject to grapple with.

The **"by 2030"** date in the title particularly punctuates the **emergency** of solving the climate problem. We're on a clock—trying to meet the deadline set by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its "Special Report" two-and-half years ago.

According to that 2018 Report, the world community has to cut greenhouse gas emissions **BY HALF** between now and 2030 if we're to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in 1850.

And for those of us living in the U.S.—where we have the high-

est per capita carbon footprint in the world—cutting greenhouse gas emissions **IN HALF** roughly amounts to **Middle Class Americans cutting their LIFESTYLES IN HALF**. **HALF** the energy use. **HALF** the transportation and travel. **HALF** the shopping. **HALF** the dietary choices. **HALF** the impact we're currently having on the planet's ecosystem by curtailing our consumption.

This is not anything anyone wants to hear. I can tell you that I sure didn't—and still don't. But it's important to remember that:

- 4 out of 5 people in the world have never even been on a plane
- 4 out of 5 people in the world don't own a car
- Middle Class Americans live better than 90 percent of the world's population

- No other country in the world has access to the incredible variety of food we have, where we can eat whatever we want, whenever we want, regardless of the season... or consumes anywhere near the meat and dairy we Americans consume daily.

...And no other nation, accordingly, has the capacity to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions the way we do... Comparatively, the rest of the world doesn't have much. People can't cut what they don't have.

Those with the most have the most to cut. And *from* those with the most, the most is required. It's a matter of both basic arithmetic and 'Environmental Justice'.

So, this is the setting we find ourselves in... with **NINE** years to reduce global emissions by **HALF** (with the **REMAINING HALF** to be cut by 2050). This is a tall order, admittedly—one that's going to require major shifts in our thinking and our behavior.

Let's stop for a moment, though, to think about what we in America have gotten with this out-sized carbon footprint of ours...

- We've gotten a polluted, gutted planet with fouled air, fouled land and fouled water—with undegradable plastic in our landfills, our

oceans and even micro-plastics in our bodies.

- We've gotten a coronavirus outbreak that's directly related to our relentless industrial and agricultural encroachment on the natural world. The entire planet is now experiencing a massive biodiversity loss event: The Sixth Extinction.
- We've gotten the biggest wealth divide in human history, with the Top 1% of the U.S. population holding 15 times more wealth than the Bottom 50 percent combined. In 2018, Three White Men at the top of that list—Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, and investor Warren Buffett—held combined fortunes worth more than the TOTAL wealth of the poorest half of Americans.
- We've gotten a social structure that's as institutionally rife with **White Male Privilege** as ever. Societies with authentic 'Equality Before the Law' and equal opportunity don't need to be having a 'National Dialogue on Race' 150 years after the end of the Civil War... They don't have to be explaining **in 2021** that 'Black Lives Matter', or be dealing with deeply embedded, institutional racism in every aspect of their lives... Nor in societies where true equality prevails, do women have to mount #MeToo Movements to counter pervasive sexual harassment and discrimination.
- And finally, for our carbon footprint, we've gotten a global war machine that's spending more on war-making than ever before: In a world already beset by a pandemic and climate crisis, the U.S. government is currently embarked on a trillion-dollar modernization of its nuclear weapons arsenal so we can even more effectively kill all life on earth...

**I'm a Boomer.** As by far the oldest person on this panel, by design, I'm going first tonight because it was MY GENERATION that promulgated

this consumption-crazed, 'Throwaway Society' that's launched us down this self-destructive path.

My generation took consumption and the pursuit of material wealth to never-before-seen heights... Thirty years ago you could actually see bumper stickers on cars with billionaire Malcolm Forbes' brag that "He who dies with the most toys wins"—with its vulgar ideology that 'getting more' is all that matters... And we'll get it whatever the cost.

This selfish, cynical worldview has pushed us to the cusp of civilizational collapse. Apart from being morally hideous; it's unsustainable. And to preserve our ecosystem, we need to step back from this brink and seek another path.

## AND THERE ARE OTHER PATHS WE CAN TAKE.

Everybody knows about The Boomers. But we don't talk as much about the generation just preceding them: my parents' generation.

They grew up during the Great Depression; lived closer to the land; knew the value of local community; came of age at the start of World War II; rallied together to deal with hardship—with rationing and separation from loved ones; grew "Victory Gardens" to support the national war effort; feared for the future, because no more than us, they didn't know how things would turn out... But they never gave up hope, and they never quit. We revere and celebrate them today as "**THE GREATEST GENERATION**".

They were heroic. Common folks, but heroes nonetheless... They didn't fly. Didn't go to the mall. Had no refrigeration and ate only what was available in season. But they knew how to live and love, care for their homes and communities, and be grateful for what they had.

And there are things we can learn from them.

NOT EVERYTHING, of course. There was rampant, horrific racism, sexism and homophobia then too; and

greed, jealousy and small-mindedness. But when the world hung in the balance, they rose to the greatest challenge they'd ever face in their lives.

The whole EARTH—*our entire global ecosystem*—now desperately needs another 'Greatest Generation'... and I'm hoping all of YOU will rise to this new challenge, and step up to help chart a new course for the planet as we "BUILD BACK BETTER". What your generation chooses to do will determine our collective future.

There's tons to be done and anything anybody does is helpful.

But given the narrow window for action we have, it's also going to be imperative to 'work smart': to do the most we can given what we have to work with... Because the NEXT NINE years are critical, and we have to get moving.

So what's the 'smartest' thing we should be doing?

This is not a 'dodge' when I tell you only you can decide that for yourself. You best know your personal strengths and interests, your living situation, your political environment, and the possibilities for action.

But having said that, I do have some thoughts gleaned from my 40 years as a political organizer here in Nebraska.

Generally, in a talk like this, this is the moment when speakers exhort you to "Contact Your Members of Congress".

Well, I'm not going to tell you not to, because they need to hear their constituents care about climate change. But Nebraska's all-Republican federal delegation is not going to climb the climate barricades any time soon. Even the ones who authentically understand the climate science—like Representatives Jeff Fortenberry and Don Bacon—are not going to buck their Republican leadership in Washington, or run the risk of alienating their Trump supporter political base when they have to run for re-election every two years. So by all means, contact your two sena-

*conclusion on page 12*

# SOLVE CLIMATE BY 2030, conclusion

tors and district congress member. But know that this will be a long slog. And it may not produce much in the way of concrete results when we need to move fast.

Sadly, things aren't much better in the Nebraska Legislature. Governor Pete Ricketts is an out-and-out climate denier, and the Legislature is heavily populated with deniers and obstructors. They too need to hear from the constituents—and we should continue to lobby them... But again, don't hold your breath.

On the other hand, as you'll hear from our next speaker, the City of Lincoln just adopted a Climate Action Plan on a Bi-partisan vote. Climate impacts will be considered with every action city government takes from this point forward. Getting that to happen was the result of literally years of organizing: Meeting with local officials, speaking to groups, trying and failing... and retooling and trying again. But now Lincoln is positioned to be a model and a laboratory for climate mitigation and adaptation that other communities can appropriate to their own circumstances.

Wherever you are, whatever your situation, there's something you can do politically to advance the work of climate action. You'll want to take some time to study and identify the courses of action best-suited for you: **Whether it's prodding a public body** (city council, county commission, school board, Board of Regents, public power district, NRD)... **Or modeling a leaner, less-consumptive lifestyle for your social network** (such as eating a more plant-based diet, riding your bike instead of driving)... **Or—my own personal passion—growing some of your own food.**

I'll close my remarks with a little background about the neighborhood garden we've established in our city

block in Lincoln: the Hawley Hamlet.

Food is the foundation of everything we do. None of us would even be on this webinar tonight if we hadn't eaten something at some point today.

And though we eat almost constantly, we almost never think about our food system. Those of us who live in the city see our role in the food chain as merely that of consumers, as 'eaters'—not producers. But like just about everything else, our global food system is in crisis.

- The extreme weather of climate change will make it harder to grow food, decreasing yield—just as a growing world population is increasing overall demand.
- As of this instant, the average bite of food we eat travels 2,000 miles to get to our mouths.
- Even here in Nebraska—the renowned 'breadbasket' of the world—90 percent of the food we eat is imported from outside the state.
- Fully dependent on this global distribution system to supply our food, the typical grocery store and restaurant stocks just three-days-worth of inventory. Just 72 hours... And the COVID pandemic has shown us just how easily that global distribution system can break down—leading to food shortages.

Growing some of our own food and re-localizing our food supply increases the odds we'll always have something for dinner.

As a state, we have to start shifting our agricultural system from its myopic focus on growing livestock feed (our field corn and soybeans) to again growing food for human consumption.

But those of us living in the urban environment can also start doing our

part by growing what we can. While we don't have the room in our yards to grow 'calorie crops' like grains, dry beans and potatoes, we can grow perishable fruits and vegetables better than anyone else. Because they're harvested right on site, right outside our kitchen door, what we grow will be fresher and therefore more nutritious.

Twelve years ago, my wife and I began digging up our grass lawn to put in an 'edible landscape' and establish the first garden in our block. Today, in a block with no vacant lots, 20 of our neighbors now annually garden an area the equivalent of 80 yards of a football field, sideline to sideline—growing both food and neighborhood.

We grow lettuce and strawberries, carrots and cucumbers, beets and green beans, zucchini, tomatoes and peppers. We call our block the "Hawley Hamlet", after the Hawley Neighborhood we live in. People who lived in the same block together for years and never even knew each other's names now garden side by side.

We're not going to feed ourselves, and, in and of itself, we know this isn't going to 'solve' the climate problem. But we're making better use of what little ground we have in the city core, growing some food for our tables—and we're **'building community'**... Which is what we're going to be needing a lot more of if we're going to cut our carbon emissions as drastically as we need to.

I'll just end by saying that while I have no illusions about how hard this transition is going to be the coming years, I've never been prouder to be a citizen of Lincoln... I wouldn't want to live anywhere but in the Hamlet with my fellow "Hamleteers"...

And I can't shake the feeling that, right now, I'm looking at **THE GREATEST GENERATION** America has yet seen.

# Your Foundation Speaks

by *Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President*

Donations to Nebraska Peace Foundation may be directed into two different accounts depending on the wishes of the donor. These are an unrestricted account and a restricted account. The unrestricted account goes to pay the day-to-day educational expenses of Nebraskans for Peace. This includes publishing and mailing of the *Nebraska Report*.

Donations into the restricted account add to the investments in the permanent endowment of Nebraska Peace Foundation. These investments bring in a yearly yield of 4 to 5% in dividends and interest. These dividends and interest then go into the unrestricted account to support Nebraskans for Peace as listed above.

Please indicate on your check whether you want your donation to go directly to the unrestricted account or to the restricted account where it will be invested in socially-responsible, fossil-free and mainly renewable energy stocks and bonds.



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# Malcolm X, conclusion

awakening and conversion to the Nation of Islam in a Massachusetts penitentiary.

The second conversion came after he traveled to Africa and the Mideast for the Hajj (the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca). He encountered Orthodox Islam, that professed the brotherhood of all humankind, nonviolence, the proud history of the African people, the evils of colonialism, and a deeper resentment for U.S. racism. The fruits of this conversion and the break with Elijah Mohammad was cut short, however, by his assassination at age 39 by agents of the Nation of Islam, with the cooperation of the FBI, CIA and other law enforcement agencies.

The lessons of this biography are not only a broader understanding of Malcolm X, but insights into the Civil Rights struggle and the complex interactions among actors: factions within the Nation of Islam, Martin Luther King, Jr., Orthodox Muslims, the FBI, the U.S.

Government and the media.

Fifty years after Malcolm's death, we are still trying to overcome the racism generated by White supremacy. The murder of George Floyd has begun to make us more aware that it is White supremacy that has fueled racism and the oppression of minorities in the United States. We may have come a long way since 1965, but we have many miles to travel before we rest.

The book concludes with an Appendix in which Malcolm responded to the Islamic Centre in Geneva shortly before his death. As Les Payne notes, "The beauty of the document is that it clearly shows where Malcolm's mind was at the end of his life with regard to Islam and Muslims, the role of women in society and the importance of the Black Liberation struggle in America."

Winner of the 2020 National Book Award for Nonfiction, *The Dead Are Arising* is well worth reading.

# HARD TRUTH, conclusion

storage (CCUS)...” Specific applications for carbon capture include cover crops and regenerative agriculture (see below) that will shape regional infrastructure planning initiatives—policy drivers for carbon capture and broad economic opportunities and environmental benefits of offering value for waste products—all of which will spur the development of new industries such as direct air capture.

## Renewable Energy Production

Nebraska’s renewable energy generation facilities are a considerable source of revenue to schools and other taxing entities. In 2019, renewable energy generated approximately \$6,928,800 in nameplate capacity taxes, a substitute for tax on personal property. The nameplate tax is a flat rate of \$3,518 per megawatt of a project’s generating capacity for each year of the project’s lifetime. The value of personal property, and thus the tax, typically depreciates. However, the nameplate capacity tax remains flat, providing more money and greater stability to Nebraska’s taxing jurisdictions, including schools. Economic development impacts from the construction of 1,000 MW of wind power in Nebraska are estimated to include 2,300 to 4,200 construction-period jobs, bringing total estimated lifetime economic output to Nebraska to between \$7.8 and \$14.1 billion, assuming a 20-year operations life for all wind facilities. Nebraska is among the top five states in the country for wind energy investment according to a 2020 report from the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA).

Solar power provides a small percentage of the state’s electricity, although it is rapidly becoming competitive with grid electricity, as storage capacity has increased. Solar and wind power together could provide all of the state’s power—3,832,600 GWh/year from wind, and 34.1 percent of demand from rooftop solar panels, using 8,200 MW of solar panels. Where new investment in transmission capacity is required, such construction would create thousands of in-state jobs, an economic

boost to non-metro counties.

Baird Holm LLP reports that Nebraska’s wind and solar resources continue to attract new investment (Facebook, Adobe, Hormel and Smuckers). Other economic giants are rumored to be looking at Nebraska as well.

Nebraska is the number two ethanol producing state in the nation, at 2.5 billion gallons per year, according to Renewable Fuels Nebraska, with a \$5 billion impact on the state’s economy. Ethanol utilizes 40 percent of Nebraska’s corn crop and is largely responsible for higher prices to corn farmers for much of the past decade—sales which have bolstered main street prosperity across non-metro counties. Nebraska’s 25 ethanol plants employ over 1300 workers.

Ethanol and other biofuels, including soy diesel, offer potential environmental benefits, replacing fossil fuel and improving air quality, according to the “Princeton [University] Carbon Mitigation Initiative”, with the priceless advantage of technology and infrastructure already in place. That is, the wheel need not be reinvented. PCMI recommends that ethanol production be doubled, at a minimum. If you’re not driving an all-electric vehicle yet, buy E30. Push state and local officials to use E85.

## Regenerative Agriculture

Green America, which addresses food and climate issues, says, “With the adoption of organic and regenerative agricultural practices, food and farming systems can transition from being pollution emitters to important stakeholders in carbon sequestration and part of the solution towards reversing climate change.”

The global system of agriculture is dominated today by a handful of corporations which answer to shareholders, exist to maximize profit, leverage governments and officials to keep these giants large and in charge. Such monopolies mean the folks who sell inputs use economy of scale to capture supply, create monopolies, absorb small competitors and make sure ag producers often have just one market into which to sell... the same folks who process

ag product... the same folks who retail that ag product... the same folks who make as much as 25 percent a year in return to equity, while farm and ranch families in the U.S. have made just +/- 2% return to equity for the past 50 years.

We can do better. Buy green. Source locally. The realities of the pandemic, including increased hunger among the poor and disrupted supply chains for the rest of us, have exposed the dysfunctions of modern industrial food systems. We must do better. We wouldn’t be the first empire in human history to crash and burn over bad ag policy. Ask any archaeologist.

## Investment in Education

Nebraska must increase funding for education—for preschools, K-12, community colleges, and state colleges and universities, for job training and retraining—to make this greatest of public goods affordable to everyone. We must think like citizens, like people who invest in lasting legacies for the greater good, not like budget shoppers who know the price of everything and the value of nothing. STEAM—science, technology, English, arts and mathematics—classes are fundamental to educating Nebraskans for labor markets accessible through broadband and satellite to folks living at the far end of any road.

## The Good Life

Protect, preserve and celebrate Nebraska’s Good Life. “Natural resources do not have to be converted into crops, electricity or other commodities to support economic growth. Instead, growth can occur when natural resources provide recreational opportunities (birdwatching, fishing, boating, etc.) and other amenities consumers find desirable. This process is called “amenity-driven growth” according to a report by economist Ernie Nieme (2006), which predicted that the future economy of Nebraska would be served by attracting highly productive individuals who can work remotely and live anywhere they like. “Areas with abundant amenities tend to attract people—especially entrepreneurs

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and those with higher levels of education—and to experience faster growth in jobs and income." A new work/life model has swiftly evolved during the pandemic; many people work from home, opening the way for Nieme's recommendations to take root. Nebraska has much to offer: great schools, clean air, open spaces, housing prices that sound like a joke to folks from coastal cities where a million USD buys what we consider a modest home in most non-metro counties, low-cost public power, abundant groundwater and miles of surface water, fine communities in which to raise families, a dominant culture of general civility, amid a landscape, diverse, much of it unspoiled and of heart-breaking beauty.

### **Vaccination**

There is a cautionary tale told in flood country. Miss Lucy stands on her porch as the water rises round. A neighbor in a pickup comes by. "Climb in, Miss Lucy," he shouts. "No thank you," she says. "The Lord will save me." When the water comes

in the house, Miss Lucy climbs the stairs and watches out her bedroom window. A man comes by, poling his bateau. "Let me help you down into my bateau," he says. "No thank you," Miss Lucy says. "God will save me." In the night, the water still rising, Miss Lucy climbs onto her roof. A spotlight appears in the windy black sky and a helicopter descends. The pilot leans out and yells, "I'm going to lower a swing. Buckle yourself in and we will pull you up and take you to higher ground." Again she refuses. "Jesus will save me." She drowns and goes to Heaven, where she gives the Lord a piece of her mind. "Where were You? I can't believe You let me drown," she scolds. Jesus says, "All due respect, I sent you a truck, a boat and a chopper. Just what exactly were you waiting for?"

A May 3, 2021, *New York Times* article reports "more than half of adults in the United States have been inoculated with at least one dose of a vaccine. But daily vaccination rates are slipping, and there is widespread consensus among scientists

and public health experts that the herd immunity threshold is not attainable... in the foreseeable future, and perhaps not ever... the virus is changing too quickly, new variants are spreading too easily and vaccination is proceeding too slowly..."

Herd immunity, once the centerpiece of the Trump Administration's pandemic strategy, is rendered less and less possible due to the vaccine resistance now a mark of the far right brand. Taking just one dose of two increases the likelihood that ever more virulent Covid-19 variants will emerge. "Vaccinations," conclude the experts cited in the *Times*, "remain the key to transforming the virus into a controllable threat" like a seasonal flu.

The most important path for Nebraskans today, to serve the economics of a faster state recovery, is becoming fully vaccinated and practicing health and safety protocols in all 93 counties. Post pandemic, forward-thinking communities will thrive and grow.

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# HARD TRUTH

*by Sally Herrin*

## Building Resilience in Post-Pandemic Rural Nebraska

The Trumpist right frequently references “The Forgotten Man”—often pictured as a White farmer. Nationally, the meme is not without truth: while the rest of the country has rebounded from the Great Recession, rural U.S. counties generally have not. A recent uptick in the price of corn and soybeans may seem an encouraging sign, but ‘futures’ are educated guesses at best. Corporate agriculture extracts by far the greater part of value from Nebraska’s ag product, for the benefit of out-of-state shareholders,

and is to farmers and ranchers what the casino is to gamblers. In the long run, the house always wins.

The rural economy is not just about agriculture, and climate change with rising temperatures and water shortages will compel changes in how we farm and ranch. Still, agriculture remains the #1 industry in our state.

### Carbon Sequestration

Final regulations for the Carbon Credit U.S. Tax Credit Amendments Act were set

in January 2021. Now those involved with a broad range of carbon capture projects and technology can claim tax credits under Section 45Q.

This bi-partisan bill was endorsed by dozens of labor unions, farming and clean energy organizations. Supporters wrote, “The science is clear... greenhouse gas reductions necessary to address the climate crisis will require widespread and rapid deployment of all available technologies, including carbon capture utilization and