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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Fair traders adapt to COVID times

By Mary Stamp

Denise Attwood, co-owner of Ganesh Himal Trading Co. with Austin Zimmerman, has found that COVID-19 has created “interesting times” and challenges to the scope of the fair trade business.

Felipe Gonzales, Maria Cuc, Oscar and Penelope Haupt and Jillian Joseph have also found their fair trade outlets impacted by COVID-19.

They are all concerned about the people who grow coffee, weave textiles, and create the fair trade crafts, arts, ceramics, clothing and gifts they sell.

The four have found new ways to do business, including a “distanced” Fair Trade Festival in October and November and setting up a website to sell items online.

Sales of wholesale fair trade items Ganesh Himal receives from producers in Nepal and sells to U.S. and Canadian retailers dropped 50 percent since March. Sales were down nearly 90 percent in April, and 80 percent in May.

“We are digging out of a hole, but keeping everyone employed normal hours, with staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment



Jillian Joseph of Kizuri, Felipe Gonzales and Maria Cuc of Maya Earth Coffee and Maya Color, Oscar Haupt of Conosur Imports and Denise Attwood of Ganesh Himal have changed their ways of selling fair trade products and providing for the wellbeing of the people around the world who produce the items they sell online and at a Fair Trade Festival spread out over several weekends through December.

(PPE),” Denise said. “Because early on stores were closed and we couldn’t do sales, we pivoted to help retail fair trade stores in the U.S. stay in business and adapt to the times.”

In April and May, Denise, Austin and staff poured hours into helping consumers understand via social media how important it is to support fair trade and local stores.

Ganesh Himal produced a Facebook video on ways to help customers support fair trade, and encouraged stores to set up websites and use the power of social media to market, so people can still buy fair trade items.

“We tried to think creatively, encouraging people to buy gift certificates now and choose items later, arranging curbside pick-up, using PPE in the stores and spreading the word about local fair trade stores they could support virtually,” she said.

Sarah Calvin, Ganesh Himal’s website manager, helped stores connect and learn how to represent themselves virtually so customers can support fair trade remotely.

Denise and Austin have been overwhelmed with how people *Continued on page 4*

Conservancy’s video series invites exploration of nature in backyards

COVID-19 has led Dishman Hills Conservancy (DHC) to develop an online video series to encourage parents, teachers and students to explore nature on their own in their backyards, at local parks or at the nearby conservation area.

During the months of COVID, visits to the DHC have increased as people seek to get away to places nearby to hike, bike and explore nature, said Jeff Lambert, executive director.

The Education Committee led by retired teacher Rick Severn quickly developed a “Nature at Home” video series to help stu-

dents and adults observe nature—birds, insects, animals and plants. It is available with PDF guides on the website at www.dishmanhills.org/nature-at-home/.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources recently tweeted that, by converting its outdoor classroom Kids in the Hills into the video series, Dishman Hills Conservancy showed it understands “the importance of supporting curious, young minds.”

COVID restrictions closed the day-long field study program that for 10 years brought about 500 fifth graders each year to be

in nature to collect specimens and then return to analyze them, make drawings and write reports at Camp Caro Community Park, which is off E. Appleway Blvd.

“Science is not about pouring facts into children’s heads. It is about giving them opportunities to observe and document what they see, which are key in science,” Jeff said.

To expand the field study program, the DHC education committee is developing a plan to build an Outdoor Education Center where adults and students can go into nature and return to reflect and write on what they have found and seen.

The education center, which will provide year-round access to learning in nature at Camp Caro, will include a multi-use space for learning, small events and meetings, Jeff said. It will also offer storage of outdoor materials, teaching resources and the conservancy office space.

He anticipates Spokane County, the Spokane Mountaineers and other organizations will help design and fund the center, *Continued on page 6*

Fall Festival of Sharing

Fig Tree holds fund drive for new, renewing sponsors

The Fig Tree is doing a new event, the “Fall Festival of Sharing,” a time from Oct. 21 to Nov. 29 to draw support from new and renewing sponsors for The Fig Tree monthly newspaper and its annual Resource Directory.

“It’s simply our fall sponsorship appeal, which includes a letter we sent to renewing sponsors in early October and appeals online, by email and some phone calls as a special effort to draw new supporters and regular readers,” said Marijke Fakasiieiki, development associate.

“Through quotes of speakers for the 2020 benefit and video clips from those featured in the promotional benefit video, we remind people daily of our mission of sharing stories of people who make a difference, connecting people with resources they need, offering reflection, understanding and dialogue, and building respect and solidarity among diverse people,” she said.

In addition to The Fig Tree Facebook fundraiser, anyone may set up Facebook fundraisers to support The Fig Tree to raise funds to fill the current budget shortfall for sponsorships. The goal is \$12,000, of which \$6,561 is in for 2020. By Oct. 29, \$2,157 was given for this drive—with 12 new sponsors.

To help compensate for the shortfall in income from both advertising and donations, The Fig Tree applied for and received a \$5,000 Live Stories grant from the City of Spokane Small Business Cares Act funds in October.

“Our 2020 budget includes the addition of our development associate, who has helped build partnerships for the directory and increase the number of readers,” said Mary Stamp, editor.

For information, call 535-1813, mary@thefigtree.org or visit thefigtree.org/donate.html.

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

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WCC celebrates 50th signer to anti-nuclear treaty

The World Council of Churches (WCC) celebrates that 50 states have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which for the first time establishes a comprehensive ban on developing, testing, producing, stockpiling, stationing, transferring, using and threatening to use nuclear weapons, plus obligations for victim assistance and environmental remediation.

For decades, the WCC has advocated for cooperative efforts to prohibit nuclear weapons, and has worked with churches to impress on their governments the immorality of nuclear weapons and the need for their total elimination.

"The 50th state is a landmark," said Peter Prove, director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). "It triggers the 90-day period, after which the treaty enters into legal force, creating a new standard in international law. The 50 states must implement the treaty."

Critics—like nine states that hold and develop nuclear weapons, and countries that believe they are protected under the "umbrella" of nuclear-armed states—minimize its significance, because ratifying states have no nuclear weapons. It does not bind states that are not parties to it, but it creates a new global norm towards rejecting nuclear weapons.

Emily Welty, CCIA vice-moderator and disarmament academic, said, "other treaties banning cluster munitions, land mines, chemical and biological weapons show how a legal ban can influence behavior of all states. As weapons are delegitimized and stigmatized, governments respond to internal and external pressure to be on the right side of history and ban such weapons."

With the growing stigma on possessing the weapons, governments of nine nuclear-armed states face more domestic anger on vast sums spent on nuclear arsenals, rather than on health care, education and other services to protect people.

Resolution urges visible role for women in peace

On the 20th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325, there is still question if women's work in peace and security has the media visibility it deserves. Resolution 1325 recognizes the brutal, disproportionate reality of conflict for women and girls globally, and the importance of their equal participation in all aspects of negotiating peace and security.

The WCC is in the Non-Governmental Organization Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, which wrote a letter calling for prioritizing women's participation before the Oct. 29 Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security.

Statements to the Security Council by more than 138 women leaders from 32 countries called for women's equal participation and substantive, formal inclusion of diverse women.

They said participation without the ability to influence the outcome is not participation, but observation. Ensuring meaningful participation requires dismantling systemic gender discrimination and addressing barriers to participation—patriarchal structures, sexual and gender-based violence, and lack of access to health care.

Jubilee challenges economic exploitation

At the recent Season of Creation, on the theme, "Jubilee for the Earth," WCC moderator Agnes Abuom reflected on economic justice and care for the earth. She said the pandemic has "exposed and exacerbated many inequalities, inequities and injustices prevalent in most nations. Jubilee gives us insights into five concepts: rest, restoration, replenishment, reconciliation and restitution."

Caring for creation, she reflected, involves a global economy that should be based on production and consumption of goods as per need—not greed. She called for challenging "our economic paradigm that believes in exploitation, no limits to anything, because it renders most of our communities voiceless, poor, excluded. We can only survive together if we see each other as equally made in the image of our Creator."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

'Beyond Words: Doing Justice' is theme

The Rev. Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church and leader in the Spokane Coalition Against Racism, is the keynote speaker for the virtual 2021 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, from 8:50 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 30.

From his involvement with the Washington African American Commission and the Governor's Task Force on Independent Investigation of police violence, he will address the theme, "Beyond Words: Doing Justice."

There will be a response by

four panelists and small group discussion.

Workshops will be on environment, budget/revenue, policing reform, public health, housing and immigration, each addressing issues before the legislature and connecting them with racial justice issues.

The event also includes briefings by Paul Benz, executive director of the Faith Action Network, Jessica Zimmerle of Earth Ministry/Interfaith Power and Light, and a representative of the Washington State Catholic

Conference on specific issues coming before the 2021 session of the Washington State Legislature.

Planners include The Fig Tree, Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, the Faith Action Network of Washington, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and Earth Ministry/Interfaith Power and Light.

Fliers are available to promote the event.

For information, call 535-4112, email event@thefigtree.org and visit thefigtree.org.

Lands Council offers 'Venture Outdoors'

The Lands Council is unveiling a new community-based outdoor adventure challenge entitled "Venture Outdoors!" for K-12 students.

This virtual learning activity offers students a safe outdoor adventure and an opportunity to enjoy nature, said Mike Petersen, executive director.

Each month for the rest of 2020, November and December, the Lands Council will choose four or five local Outdoor Adventure Destinations and post a "web link to adventure" for each with information, highlights,

a map and directions at www.landscouncil.org/adventure.

Students may choose one or more destinations and follow the adventure. They share a "selfie" holding a sign that says "Venture Outdoors with The Lands Council!" and post it on social media.

Students are to take appropriate safety precautions for COVID—wearing masks, limiting group size, and social-distancing.

Prizes will be awarded to students in December based on the number of outdoor adventures completed.

Outdoor Adventure Destinations include Liberty Lake Regional Park, Dishman Hills Natural Area, Huntington Park, Sandifur Bridge and the Spokane Public Montessori Storm Garden. Many of the sites are accessible by walking, bicycling and public transportation. The Lands Council will supply bus passes as needed.

In addition to "Venture Outdoors!" The Lands Council is doing weekly tree planting.

For information, call 838-4912 or email tlc@landscouncil.org.

Salvation Army seeks bell ringers

The Salvation Army of Spokane seeks bell ringers for Christmas season and is appealing to those who want to give back as a volunteer during the holidays as the Christmas Kettle program celebrates its 129th year.

Because of COVID, there has been up to a 50 percent increase in local needs this year because of lost jobs or reduced work hours, said Geriann Armstrong, who is recruiting the bell ringers.

"Many families coming to The Salvation Army had never sought assistance previously. As a result, The Salvation Army anticipates an increased need for toys and food at Christmas," she said.

The Salvation Army is hiring kettle workers who are 16 years or older by appointment only. They can be paid or volunteer.

The kettles will be seen throughout Spokane from Nov.

20 to Dec. 24.

The Corporate Kettle Kick-Off is Nov. 17 to 19 with Spokane leaders and staff decorating kettle stands and wearing costumes ringing bells at their company red kettle sites to help

vulnerable families impacted by the pandemic. The kettle is set in one spot and the bell ringer stands in a spot near it.

For information, call 329-2759 or email gerriann.Armstrong@usw.salvationarmy.org

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Editorial Team
 Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
 Directory Editor - Malcolm Haworth
 Website Developer - Lorna Kropp
 Volunteer Coordinator - Kaye Hult
 Development Assoc-Marijke Fakasiieiki
 Editing - Erin Endres, Pam Evans, Catherine Ferguson SNJM, Mary Mackay, Dru Powers, Nancy Roth

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Christmas Bureau has new format in COVID

The annual Christmas Bureau holiday assistance program of Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, Volunteers of America and The Spokesman-Review moves to an online application and drive-through format because of COVID-19.

The program, which served 27,548 people in 7,992 households last year, provides grocery vouchers, books and toys to individuals and families in the Greater Spokane area. Applicants register online by Nov. 6 at cceasternwa.org/christmas-bureau. Grocery vouchers will be mailed and children's gifts picked up by appointment in a socially distanced drive-thru at the Fairgrounds.

"We wish we could do it as we have since 1945. COVID-19 will not stop us from providing children, families and low-income individuals with holiday meal vouchers and toys," said Sierra Heinen, Catholic Charities community relations manager.

With fewer applicants so far, Catholic Charities is asking teachers, counselors, case managers and other social service professionals to refer clients. Parents will pick three choices of toys from an online toy catalog and give book preferences.

In 2019, donors gave \$557,994, more than the \$535,000 goal. Fundraising begins the day after Thanksgiving.

For information, call 358-4250, email Christmas.bureau@cceasternwa.org or visit cceasternwa.org/christmas-bureau.

Catholic Charities purchases Chewelah Manor

Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, which manages senior housing to promote dignity, recently bought Chewelah Manor, a 25-unit senior housing community in Chewelah.

"This purchase provides us with the opportunity to expand our footprint into rural areas that need affordable housing options and the services we provide. The average income in Chewelah is one of the lowest in Eastern Washington," said Chris Codd, Catholic Charities housing board member.

Catholic Charities offers seniors long-term housing stability and affordability in apartments, for which they do not pay any more than 30 percent of their income in rent. As rents rise, seniors pay an affordable, stable, predictable rate.

Chewelah Manor is across the street from St. Mary of the Rosary Parish, a natural support system for residents and "an opportunity for parishioners to put their faith in action through volunteering," Chris said.

Catholic Charities provides housing social service coordinators (HSSCs) to connect seniors with services they need, including medical, behavioral health, Social Security, public benefits, health insurance and Medicare information.

For information, call 358-4250.

Rockwood redevelops Rockwood Hawthorne

Rockwood Retirement Communities has completed bond financing of \$81.4 million to redevelop Rockwood Hawthorne into independent living apartment homes as Rockwood at Whitworth in north Spokane. The redevelopment will happen in phases. The first building is scheduled for completion in March 2021.

The first phase, Palvella Glen, features 48 assisted living apartments, 24 memory support suites and common spaces for residents and families. It will keep residents in assisted living apartments while receiving care. With this new service delivery method, Rockwood will close its 20-bed skilled nursing facility when the new building is complete.

Rick Milsow, executive director of Rockwood at Whitworth, said the second phase, which should take 20 months to complete, will feature 117 independent living apartments with amenities and services that exemplify the future of retirement living.

"The independent living building, is already more than 83 percent pre-sold, which shows the positive response to our new vision for retirement living," said Alan Curryer, Rockwood Retirement Communities' president and CEO.

A 2019 partnership between Rockwood Retirement Communities and nearby Whitworth University promotes intergenerational opportunities, giving residents access to discounted courses, the library, and athletic and performing arts events. Whitworth students will have employment, internship and intergenerational opportunities with the residents, he said.

For information, call 536-6701, email eowyn@rockwoodretirement.org or visit rockwoodretirement.org.

Virtual FAN Dinner has Spokane hosts

The Faith Action Network (FAN) of Washington is planning a Spokane area event related to its first virtual Annual Dinner, "Rise Up Together," at 5 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 15.

Spokane hosts are FAN board member Jim CastroLang and Lauren Schubring, FAN's new part-time regional organizer.

FAN is Washington's state-wide, interfaith advocacy and social justice organization.

A virtual social hour on Zoom begins at 5 p.m. and the virtual program begins at 5:30 p.m.

"We have seen FAN faith communities and individuals in all corners of Washington rise up during this year's challenges," said FAN co-director Elise DeGooyer. "In the midst of multiple pandemics, people have risen up to learn to be community in new ways, take care of neighbors, build mutual aid efforts, non-violently vigil, march and rally for Black Lives Matter,

stand with essential workers who provide healthcare, harvest food and vote their values for justice. We celebrate all that!"

A virtual gathering allows people across the state to join in, expanding the traditions of the Spokane and Renton dinners.

"We have lived through a year that required much individual strength and collective creativity," said Jim, who previously hosted the Spokane dinner. "We want to celebrate how our vision of a just world keeps us going and helps sustain our courage to Rise Up Together in 2021. Funds help us keep advocating for inclusion, racial equity and justice."

"We have seen in a new way this year how much isolation can divide us," said Lauren. "It's important we learn to rise up together and fight for a community we can all thrive in. The dinner is an opportunity to come together

to create connection and carry on alongside of each other."

As part-time regional organizer in Eastern Washington, Lauren, who lives in Spokane, will help faith communities in FAN's Network of Advocating Faith Communities connect.

Originally from Michigan, she moved to Spokane in 2013 to attend Moody Bible Institute and returned to Michigan after graduating in 2015. She came in 2017 to work with The Arc of Spokane.

The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane is an event sponsor and more Spokane sponsors are sought. The Annual Dinner is free and is a fundraiser.

RSVP at bit.ly/FANDinner2020 by Friday, Nov. 13 to receive the link to participate.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit <https://fanwa.org/annual-dinner/>.

County MOW offers restaurant meals

Because of COVID-19, the 12 Greater Spokane County (GSC) Meals on Wheels (MOW) Silver Cafés closed in mid-March. They were a place seniors gathered for a meal. As the program increased safety precautions, participants were invited to sign up for home-delivered meals.

For those who did not, GSC-MOW, which serves people 60 years and older, created the Diner's Choice Program in mid-April, with local restaurants providing meals to meet participants' food preferences.

They order take-out, but GSC-MOW and Aging and Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington pay the restaurants.

By September, the program served 11,173 meals to 850 seniors in the county. It replicates the socialization and nutrition of the cafés, puts money in the local economy and brings relief to restaurants. To date, Diner's Choice has paid \$292,094 dollars to county restaurants, providing more than 37,000 meals to more than 1,200 seniors.

As funds were depleted, GSC-MOW reassessed where it offers Diner's Choice. Originally county-wide, as of Nov. 1, it is only in rural areas—Mead, Deer Park, Chattaroy, Colbert, Airway Heights, Medical Lake, Cheney, Spangle, Rockford and unincorporated areas.

GSC-MOW seeks volunteers for home-delivery in rural areas. For information, visit GSCMealsonwheels.org/Getinvolved.

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Websites are being developed to sell fair trade products online

Continued from page 1
have stepped up.

“Sales were down through July, but in August rose 14 percent. In September they went down a bit, but slowly people are adjusting and understanding how to connect with fair trade,” she said. “People want to buy gifts, and support local and fair trade, but hesitate to go in stores. We are trying to help them learn new ways.

“Our concern is not only for fair trade stores but also for producers in Nepal, who were on complete lockdown from early April until late August,” she said.

No one could work, except knitters and others who could work in their homes if they had supplies, but there were no shipments out of Nepal until early August, because there were no international flights.

“We asked people to continue to work and have continually checked to make sure they were doing okay,” Denise said.

Ganesh Himal received a shipment in March right before the lockdown so producers received a large payment to help them until the next shipments in August and October, she said.

Usually, Ganesh Himal receives a shipment every two months, paying producers immediately so they have a steady income. They try to stay on schedule as international flights allow and expect a shipment in late November.

“By mid-October, COVID-19 was spiking in Nepal, and they did not have the capacity to deal with it,” she said. “It is difficult because many people are day laborers working for low wages in construction, in households or as rickshaw drivers. They live on the edge and have no resilience to survive in a lockdown. Food is available, but they have no way to buy it.”

Ganesh Himal’s related non-profit, Conscious Connections Foundation (CCF) has provided more than \$12,000 in grants for food assistance and distributed 500 reusable menstrual kits, soap and masks.

The Association for Craft Producers (ACP), which works with 1,000 low-income women artisans in Nepal, has struggled with overhead and salaries for employees and producers because of a loss of business and there being no Paycheck Protection loans in Nepal, Denise said.

Because ACP houses the Power of Five girls’ education program of the Conscious Connections Foundation, ACP’s failure would mean loss of income for women and educational stipends for girls. To help keep ACP alive, CCF gave two grants totaling \$40,000 to help cover operating costs, rents and salaries so they can continue.

The ACP has operated self-sufficiently all but four years since 1984 and has brought income to many marginalized

families through fair trade. The grants have helped them weather the COVID crisis and stay in business, Denise said.

People are adapting and more producers can now work at home, but there is a shortage of supplies, and the costs of raw materials and shipping are rising.

“Through Ganesh Himal and CCF, we seek to create resiliency. We are happy that many of our producer groups are well and working, but we recognize many in Nepal don’t have long-term employment, so CCF works with Nepali partners to identify those most in need and bring them relief,” Denise said.

In the U.S., Ganesh Himal is building different audiences besides the fair trade stores. The Fair Trade Federation is now partnering with the wholesale distributor FAIRE.com to set up an online interface so stores can find different suppliers and set up a fair trade portion on their websites expanding the scope of fair trade.

“Retailers have found us through FAIRE.com,” Denise said. “In August, we had \$8,000 in sales to new small stores throughout the country.

“In the past, we have not done trade shows because of the expense and carbon footprint involved,” Denise said, “but now we can connect stores through Zoom. So we are scheduling small Zoom trade shows without leaving town. Two stores a week can remotely shop in our warehouse by appointment to learn about new products. This is a success.”

In addition, Ganesh Himal has helped Kizuri, Spokane’s fair trade store in the Community Building at 35 W. Main, develop its website to expand their sales in this time.

So Sarah has been helping Kizuri create their website in time for the holiday season, and Ganesh Himal has covered her hours for this work.

“Initially, we are populating the website with Ganesh Himal products, because we already have photos for our website. Kizuri, Maya Color and Conosur Imports are adding their products over time. In the future, Jillian, who owns Kizuri, will have a website to help her reach communities throughout the Northwest and the nation.

Kizuri and Ganesh Himal are also holding the annual Festival of Fair Trade in a new way.

Rather than gathering retailers in the Community Building the weekend after Thanksgiving, one vendor will set up from noon to 5:30 p.m., Saturdays from Oct. 17 to Dec. 19, plus the Friday after Thanksgiving in the lobby

outside Kizuri at 35 W Main.

By spreading out the festival as the safe way to do it, Denise said they offer “a little community,” while supporting fair trade. Fewer customers—five at a time—can come in and shop distanced, with the vendor behind a plexiglass shield.

“We have kept our employees and producers paid and fair trade stores supported,” she said.

Denise already worked remotely with producers in Nepal, so little of her day-to-day work has changed, because she has always communicated through emails and Facetime chats.

For information, call 499-3320.

Guatemalans make masks
Felipe, who came to Spokane in 2001 as grants manager with the Kalispel Tribe, began bringing Guatemalan coffee, textiles and products to Spokane. That evolved into the business Maya Earth Coffee and Maya Color at mundomayaenterprises.com.

He and Maria usually would sell at fairs and events two or three times a month, most outdoors in the spring and summer, but those events weren’t held.

“Fewer artisans are making textiles now because of less demand with tourism down and limited travel,” Felipe said. “Many are using their sewing machines to make masks.”

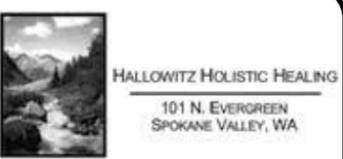
For information, call 768-3193.

Conosur is doing few shows
Oscar said he and Penelope have recently done little business with Conosur Imports.

He has not gone to Chile for a year because of its high rate of COVID per capita. Chile has been in quarantine since March, so producers they work with are not making products.

Oscar said they pay the artists and workers in Chile up front and have accumulated enough products for several years. They usually do six shows a year.

For information, call 990-1098.

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High school youth lead the PJALS' Young Activist Leaders Program

Two high school students are youth leaders for the Young Activist Leaders Program (YALP) of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS).

Ivy Pete, 16, has been a member since 2013. She is a junior at North Central High School (NCHS).

Sarah Hegde, 15, has been a member since signing up at the 2019 Women's March. She is a sophomore at Lewis and Clark High School.

They find YALP a place that nurtures youth voices and a place to interact with diverse youth who share a passion for activism.

"PJALS brings everyday people into a community to do organizing and develop programs on a myriad of topics, such as human rights, racial justice and societal peace," said Ivy. "It has provided me with a unique experience in social justice and community organizing."

Young people meet after school to create a space they want to see and support each other.

Ivy sees it as an opportunity for young people to move to the forefront in organizing and realize they do not need to reinvent efforts but build on a base of what has been.

"We are a group of intelligent young people who make lasting, impactful change through protesting, organizing, letter writing, school walkouts and other strategies," she said.

"PJALS is intergenerational, people working in the same realm with the same principles for 45 years," she said.

YALP is one way PJALS engages everyday people in action for peace, economic justice and human rights through community organizing, nonviolence training, volunteer involvement, educational events and advocacy opportunities.

"It has drawn me to learn more about how I can support the community as a young person," she said. "Youth are often thought of as not having the same capacity as adults, but we can use our skills as mentors, too."

YALP is about youth empowerment to build a better community. Members bring their experiences in sports, clubs and community boards to expand the perspectives of other members.

"We ran the program in person until March, when we went virtual," Sarah said. "It's hard to build relationships online, but we have adjusted."

YALP meets at 4 p.m., every Tuesday on Zoom. Sometimes she, Ivy and other youth organizers lead workshops. There are guest speakers on first Tuesdays.



Ivy Pete



Sarah Hegde

Other weeks, they work on personal projects or hear updates on the Spokane City Council and the District #81 School Board.

In the early summer, they organized a vehicle procession through South Hill neighborhoods after George Floyd's killing to promote support for Black Lives Matter.

"People on the South Hill do not often engage in downtown protests," Sarah said. "It was a call for awareness and to action."

"We planned it on Thursday and did it on Saturday," she said. "It was a way to join in a protest respecting social distance so it would be safe."

During the summer, about 50 youth registered for a five-week program on grass roots organizing strategies. In the fall, about 30 youth have been meeting each Tuesday.

Sarah and Ivy sometimes offer lectures on organizing strategies.

Ivy, who grew up in Spokane, said she passes as white. Her father is Paiute and her mother is from England.

The Paiute are from Northern Nevada. While there are few Paiute in Spokane, she pointed out that even though Spokane is less diverse, it has a significant urban native population.

"I see society as moving people to learn about racial and religious diversity, with some in solidarity as allies with those who have been oppressed," she said. "While I am white passing, I try to honor my culture, recognizing and balancing the privilege I am afforded."

Ivy's parents, who own Boots Bakery, have taught her to be communicative, caring and concerned about what is happening.

"I grew up to value community and to respect all people," she said.

She works with them at Boots Bakery, where customers are diverse in race, religion, politics and class.

"Our job as human beings is to work for everybody," she said.

Sarah, who was born in Oregon, lived in Michigan and Southern California before moving to Liberty Lake and then Spokane five years ago. She values the diversity she encountered in other places she lived.

Her father moved to the U.S. from India when he was seven, and her mother, who works in communications at Providence Health, is white. In Southern

California, they lived in a Hispanic community and her family looked like everyone else. She did not experience racism. In Spokane, she does not look like most people. She has experienced disrespect, like being told to go back to India—despite District #81's 2020 Equity Resolution.

Sarah was not previously involved in activism or school clubs.

Ivy, however, is not only involved with YALP. She is also a youth advisor on the Spokane School Board, on the City's Youth Advisory Council, on the Legislative Youth Advisory Council of the Lieutenant Governor's office, and involved with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Youth Safety Office.

In August she began a year as legislative intern for Kate Burke on the Spokane City Council, which will help her learn more about organizing and the legislative side of social change related to city issues.

Ivy brings insights and skills learned from these involvements to PJALS to build a better coalition of youth using their skills

to make change, because what happens in the community, state and nation "impacts us now, not in 10 years. We are stakeholders in the process and need to be advocates."

At North Central, Ivy has also worked for change. She and Olivia Tabish, another NCHS Indigenous student, have been working through the process of retiring the NC symbol, Indians.

She is pleased that District #81 is developing a plan for evaluating names and mascots at every school.

"I am working to assure an even playing field for everyone," Ivy said.

Sarah wants to have a career as an activist and make good money. She has been exploring how to go into social justice work and is interested in studying law after she graduates from college.

Over the years, Sarah estimates PJALS has involved hundreds of youth in activism.

For information, call 838-7870, email ipete@pjals.org or visit pjals.org/young-activists-leaders-program-yalp-fall-session.

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Nigerian religion professor says concept of God preceded missionaries

In one Nigerian language, the name for God is “Osanobua,” meaning God who created the universe. Yorubas call God “Orisagbaya,” meaning God who occupies/owns the universe.

“Those are just two names from two cultures in one African country,” said Itohan Idumwonyi, who came to Spokane in 2018 as an assistant professor of religious studies and as an interdisciplinary scholar with the Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University.

“Traveling through Africa, the concept of ‘God’ and belief in ‘God’ existed in different cultures before European missionaries came,” she said.

Such insights are ways Itohan offers students a new lens as she introduces them to African religions, African diaspora religions, African studies, sociology of religion, African womanist theology, religion and gender.

She invites students to use ethnographic insights to move beyond colonial views of African religions.

Itohan, who earned a bachelor’s degree in 1998 and a master’s in 2002 in religious studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, said even her name speaks of God. “Itohan” means “God’s mercy” “kindness,” “favor” and “compassion.”

She taught and did research for more than 10 years at the University of Benin and did community services with the African Women Empowerment Guild.

In 2012, she earned a master’s in theological studies at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., and in 2018, a doctoral degree in religious studies at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

By challenging students’ “preconceived notions and conventional thinking,” she inspires them to new understandings to prepare them to live and work in a diverse society and world.

For example, she makes the point that in Africa’s 54 countries there are diverse cultures, beliefs and languages.

Most of the perhaps 2,000 African languages and dialects have words identifying God as the creator.

“The dominant Western Christian idea is/was that Africa had no religion before missionaries came and missionaries introduced God to Africa,” Itohan said. “That is not correct. God as a concept existed among the people of different religions as is evident in the different names for God in many languages and cultures.

The different names do not mean Africans have many gods.

“God is one,” she said. “Non-Africans mistake African deities and ancestors for gods. African ancestors are like the saints in Catholicism.

“A closer study of the religious practice of the ‘acclaimed’ world religions reveals the similarities



Itohan Idumwonyi stirs awareness of diverse cultures and religions.
Photo courtesy of Gonzaga University

with African religions,” she said.

Itohan said that Anglican priest and theology professor John Mbiti is considered the father of African religion because his books on African religion and philosophy tell how attitudes and beliefs evolved in many African societies.

“Africans are notoriously religious. I’m using ‘notorious’ with a positive meaning. When they cultivate a farm, there is a ritual. There are rituals when children are born and for their stages of development,” Itohan said. “African businesses often hang a sign, saying ‘In God We Trust.’”

“Mbiti said God was in everyday affairs. We sleep and wake up with God. We eat and drink with God,” she said.

“Bringing awareness of African religion to an academic setting like GU informs students of religious traditions beyond Catholicism, because they will encounter other religions in their work and careers,” Itohan said. “African traditional religions are different from mainline Christian traditions and practices, but also have similarities.

“Students need to learn to empathize with people of very different religions. If they find themselves in positions of making policies, they need to know how to deal with people of different cultures or religions,” she said.

She finds that many at Gonzaga have encountered only Catholicism from grade school to college. In Itohan’s classes, learning that African religion is similar to Catholicism opens

for them “a vista for meaning-making in life.”

“If they hear, know and understand that, I have done my job,” she said. “I hope they embrace understanding another person’s traditional cultural way of life and to see life beyond what they have always known.”

Itohan also pointed out that African Christianity is an umbrella body. Within it are African Catholic, Pentecostal and Orthodox churches that are now incorporating African customs, life and meanings.

This fall she is teaching a class on how literature portrays religion, women, men and culture.

“I focus on women, because women are so often written out of history,” she said. “African women today are speaking up for themselves and others. Women need to be empowered and draw strength from each other.”

Itohan quoted an African saying: “If you want to get to your destination on time, travel alone, but if you want to travel far and successfully, travel with others.”

She believes that to find purpose in the journey of life, people need to collaborate, draw strength from and give strength to one another, something she did in community engagement through her church in Nigeria and does through prayer and support groups she leads in Spokane.

In Nigeria, Itohan said many women are housewives depending on their husbands for financial support, so they do not speak up if things are wrong.

So she created a revolving

“micro-loan” program. She gave 3,000 to 5,000 naira—\$7 to \$13—to a woman to begin a trade. In consultation with the woman, Itohan sets a payment plan that starts the fourth week. She seeks no return or report the first three weeks, but by the fourth week the woman begins to pay back the money following the payment plan. Over 10 months to a year, she pays back the full investment with an additional fraction, Itohan explained.

“I give that capital to another woman to start a trade. Now nearly 20 women have benefitted from the program. With what they earn, they can support their families and themselves, and they have tuition for their children to go to school. The capital recycles over time and expands,” she said.

“Because women can support themselves and their children, they are empowered and speak up,” she said.

Itohan also offers financial literacy workshops to teach budgeting.

In Nigeria, she also started a teen and adult education program and had her church youth group visit juveniles in a correction facility. They exchanged ideas, read books, sang and danced with the juvenile inmates.

“Visits gave church teens awareness of teens in detention. So they thanked their parents for what they had taken for granted. They studied harder and become more committed,” she said. “Teens in prison learned from the church teens that there is hope for a better tomorrow.

“Collaboration gives the women and teens a new lease on life,”

she explained.

Itohan, an ordained minister, attends Victory Faith in Spokane Valley, an American Pentecostal church. She also continues to connect with women’s groups through weekly phone and Zoom meetings.

She hosts a Zoom prayer group for women she met at a Nigerian church she attended in Boston. The elderly women are grandmothers from Benin City. They meet at 6 p.m. Sundays to pray for churches, priests, ministers and families around the world.

Each week she also leads a group for elderly women—grandmothers who live in various U.S. states and Canada—at 8 a.m. Saturdays. They meet by phone to share the challenges they have with their children and grandchildren. They share Scriptures and pray in a Benin language.

Itohan, who met her husband in Nigeria, said he is working in Mississauga, Ontario, near Toronto, because he was not allowed to immigrate to the U.S. They have two children, one at Gonzaga Prep and the other at Roosevelt Elementary School.

Six weeks after arriving in Spokane, her mother died, so she flew to Nigeria for five days. Her father had died in 2015. She has six siblings in Nigeria.

Itohan said GU’s religious studies faculty welcomed her as part of their family, supporting her when her mother died, as she lives apart from her husband and now works to meet the challenges of teaching in the pandemic.

For information, email idumwonyi@gonzaga.edu.



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Need for food and response to provide it climbs significantly in region

Second Harvest of the Inland Northwest reports that the need for food in the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be high nationally and in the Inland Northwest.

In the fiscal year from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, it distributed 43 million pounds of food, enough for 35.8 million meals for people experiencing hunger, through its more than 200 food banks in 26 counties in Eastern Washington and North Idaho.

“Before the pandemic, we distributed about 217,000 pounds of food a week through our county hunger-relief network,” said Jason Clark, president and CEO. “Since March, we averaged 465,000 pounds a week.”

This is 11 million more pounds of food than in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, he said. In July and August, Second Harvest distributed 6.1 million pounds of food in 2019, and 10.3 million pounds in 2020.

Jason also contrasted distribution at the Mobile Markets, which supplement food banks and pantries. There were 359 mobile market events from Jan.



Volunteer packages food for Second Harvest to distribute.

Photo courtesy of Eric Williams

1 to Sept. 30, 2020, distributing more than 4.8 million pounds of food, including nearly 1.9 million pounds of fresh produce to 16,805 families.

From January to mid-October 2019, Second Harvest did 107 mobile food events. In that period in 2020, it did 414 mobile events because of more need.

“As people drove through mobile food event at the Spokane County Fairgrounds in September, 40 percent said it was the first time they had gone to a food bank,” he said.

Many also receive food distributed at schools. Families drive up and pick up a lunch in a food bag, Jason said.

Meanwhile, less food is available from food rescue with restaurants and grocery stores.

Historically, Second Harvest has received little government funding, Jason said, but it accepted a \$9 million grant from Spokane County under federal CARES Act funding.

Of those funds, 91 percent is to purchase food and the rest is for fuel, freight, equipment,

packaging, deliveries and rental of off-site storage.

The food will be distributed through Second Harvest’s 94 nonprofit agencies and 102 school partners in Spokane County, its Mobile Markets and Bite2Go.

Some temporary programs will end:

• Funding for the USDA’s Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, Farmers to Families, was extended to a fourth round and will run six weeks start-

ing on Nov. 2. Second Harvest distributed about 12,000 boxes a week since mid-May.

• The National Guard is expected to begin demobilization on Dec. 15 from assisting with Pasco and Spokane distributions.

• The Washington Emergency Food Box program ends Dec. 16. Since April, Second Harvest has distributed about 10,000 boxes a week.

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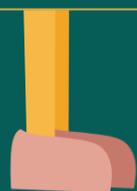


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COVID jump-started Street Medicine program for homeless people

By Marilyn Urness

One silver lining arising because of COVID-19 is that Spokane's Street Medicine program for homeless people sped up to open earlier than planned.

Started to care for people experiencing homelessness, it reaches that population where they are and serves as a point of contact for homeless service organizations and health care.

"The program was in formation before the first wave of COVID-19, but the outbreak kicked it into gear," said Luis Manriquez, a family medicine physician in practice in Spokane, who is the program director.

It is a joint effort of Washington State University's Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD), CHAS Health (Community Health Association of Spokane), SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners), Jewels Helping Hands, Volunteers of America and Catholic Charities.

Luis, assistant clinical professor at WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, leads Health Equity development efforts.

A graduate of the University of Washington College of Medicine in 2011, he completed a family medicine residency at Oregon Health Sciences University.

Previously, Luis, whose roots are in Arizona and Texas, earned a bachelor's degree in film and television at the New York University Tisch School of the Arts.

In March, he started doing rounds with Street Medicine from 9 a.m. to noon, Mondays,



Luis Manriquez
Photo courtesy of WSU

Wednesdays and Fridays, and 2 to 5 p.m., Saturdays. He hopes to expand services to all week.

"The team is a pool of volunteers. Some are clinicians and others are students doing rotations. We meet at the CHAS Dennis Murphy Clinic downtown to pack backpacks with supplies, and ride in the van until we find people," Luis explained. "Each team has a homeless outreach worker, clinician and a SRHD staff/volunteer."

The team provides screening and testing for COVID-19, acute medical care, the hepatitis A vaccination, HIV and syphilis rapid testing, and follow up appointments with CHAS, SRHD or House of Charity (HOC) clinic.

Commonly they treat sunburns, frostbite, lacerations, infections and traumatic injuries. The team acts as a mobile urgent care unit. They also call in prescriptions and treat wounds.

While Street Medicine was

implemented in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and to provide health care to an already vulnerable population, it was in the works before then.

"It's easy for people to fall through the cracks," Luis explained. "People who don't have a phone can't make appointments, call in a prescription or call about health insurance issues."

"Small, mundane issues for us are huge on the street. People who are homeless are disconnected from the system," he said. "There are many ways our system is not acceptable, one is how hard it is for people who are homeless to access it. It's no one's fault, but the system doesn't work."

As it is, most health issues are not addressed until they become critical and require a trip to an emergency room. This can cause health care problems that could be prevented, Luis said. Often health problems were reported to a shelter social worker who determined if the situation required a call to emergency services.

Now, Street Medicine acts as a connection point to address health problems before they become critical.

"Our goal is to act as an adapter between people experiencing homelessness and the health care system, police, volunteers and shelters. We want to create a network of people and organizations," said Luis.

With social distancing and quarantine taking effect in COVID-19, Luis said the task of providing medical care for people experiencing homelessness

became even more difficult.

"There has always been a disconnect between health care providers and people who are homeless. COVID-19 made the situation worse," he said.

For instance, many health care providers moved to Telecare. This is a safe alternative to in-person doctor visits, but only for those who have a phone or computer, he said. Most of the homeless population lacks cell phones or reliable ways to charge them.

"When COVID-19 hit, the city shut down, with a ripple effect stranding many who are homeless," Luis said.

The virus did not spread in the homeless population as fast as predicted, he said. There was a string of sickness in shelters in January and February, but lack of testing made it hard to gather data. Street Medicine started before quarantine, social distancing and COVID-19 testing began, so "we don't know if there was an outbreak," he said.

"People experiencing homelessness are generally socially distanced in the summer. However, there's concern for when winter hits and shelters are reopened. People will be in close quarters and the risk of transference is higher," said Luis.

Street Medicine is not the first program Luis started to connect medical practitioners with social work. Since starting his career, he has asked, "how do I connect being a doctor with social justice?"

Luis saw a lack of action to address needs of vulnerable people. He saw it as his duty as

a health practitioner to address these needs and find solutions through social work.

In 2009, he helped found the Health Equity Circle. He is regional manager of the program that has hundreds of students in several states. In Spokane, it affiliates with EWU, WSU, Gonzaga University and the University of Washington.

Based in Spokane, the Health Equity Circle connects volunteer students from different practices and studies to the community and each other.

"We take their passion and give them skills to partner to address issues that affect us all," Luis said.

Chapters include undergraduate and graduate students in the social sciences, public health, health care and law. They tackle child health, correctional medicine, environmental health, healthcare and homelessness.

"Working with community partners, Health Equity Circle students have increased funding for affordable housing by \$67 million dollars, supported a \$327 million bond for early childhood education, protected medical interpretive services from budget cuts and supported legislation for workers to have access to sick and safe leave," he said.

Luis continues to apply his passion for social justice and medical expertise to help the community and inspire others to do so, too.

For information, call 360-395-5825 or email luis.manriquez@wsu.edu.

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Solidarity, presence, persistence needed to overcome hate, inequality

While we continually need to grow in our cultural/racial sensitivity and competence, we must always be ready to act in solidarity with Black and Brown brothers and sisters to end racial violence, injustice and inequity in our community, society, nation and world. We need to be aware when white supremacists infiltrate police and take over streets as armed militia, taking racism to a new level.

Racism impacts everyone.

Now is the time to pull together and not let power politics divide us. We need to be empowered voices in a movement.

Each generation must learn and seasoned anti-racists must be vigilant, never assuming racism is completely overcome. Extremists are around the corner, in institutions and in our communities.

Recently white supremacists have sought

to disrupt and discredit peaceful Black Lives Matters protests. It's part of a propaganda power play, the age-old "divide-and-conquer" of authoritarian power seekers.

To keep themselves visible in media, politicians may play for media attention to win elections, knowing news is about the unusual, conflict, violence, celebrity sex and sensation. A "bully and bigot" pandering to racists creates incessant noise that makes news and sells newspapers. More journalists do see and challenge that trap, but more need to recognize it.

We need to see racism and hate. The Inland Northwest had a reputation as a hotseat of white supremacy from the 1980s to 2001, when the Aryan Nations had an enclave north of Hayden. While it was less reported, the region was the center of human rights efforts to overcome

that through the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, NAACP Spokane, the Spokane Ministers Fellowship, Martin Luther King Center, the Peace and Justice Action League, faith communities, nonprofits, businesses and community leaders. We now have the Human Rights Education Institute, Gonzaga University's Institute for Hate Studies, and teach about the Holocaust and hate in schools, but there's more to do to challenge racial disparities in criminal justice, housing, jobs, education, income and opportunity.

Marches remind and educate the community that Black Lives Matter, that the names of streets, schools and mascots need to change. The toll of uranium mining on the Spokane Tribe still needs to be addressed. There's so much to do.

Already Mukogawa Fort Wright Insti-

tute has been renamed Mukogawa U.S. Campus. Soon Fort Wright Dr. may be Whist-alks Way, after an indigenous woman who stood up to Wright. A name change has been in the works since 1993.

We need to persist to progress into our multi-racial, multi-colored, multicultural present and future, not just as a vision or words, but as a reality we embrace.

As I write this editorial, I don't know election results, but I know we must neither just sigh in relief nor give up in despair.

Every day we have responsibility to work toward being a nation of, by and for the people of all races, religions, cultures, politics, economics and realities.

It's our responsibility as people of faith to carry on, aware no candidate is a savior, but we are the ones to act in faith, faithfully.

Mary Stamp - Editor



Sounding Board

Commentaries

Photo of Black clergy by Jim Castrolang

Black pastors to White pastors: 'We are beyond talk. We want action.'

In the Sept. 25 "Beyond Words: Count Us In" event, Spokane's Black pastors spoke to White pastors and lay people seeking to confess and repent to the Black pastors for failing to stand alongside them in the fight against systemic racism and racial injustice in this city, state and nation.

Acknowledging the good intentions of the planners, they said that "by failing to consult or consider the impact it may have on the community most affected by racial injustice and police brutality, this event is in itself yet another act of cultural insensitivity and white superiority."

The Black clergy and faith leaders questioned the authenticity of the repentance, as John the Baptist questioned the Pharisees' confession and then recommended they examine their own hearts and "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." (Matthew 3:8)

We, the Black clergy of Spokane have circled this wagon of reconciliation for many years at many planned events. We have joined our White brothers and sisters of faith on platforms and stages in the arena and several churches to make public confessions and sign covenants in agreement that racism is sin and should not be tolerated nor allowed to sit comfortably within the pews of the Christian church.

We have prayed together, broken bread

together, marched together on MLK day, and rode on buses together to Promise Keepers events. Despite this, we observe many White brothers and sisters return to pulpits forgetting to keep the promise.

We witnessed this racial complicity as far back as "Mission Spokane," where the succession of an African American pastor into the role of President was denied by White pastors who were clearly uncomfortable having a Black leader. We continue to witness tokenism and using gifted Black Christians to symbolize diversity and equality with no real pathway towards executive leadership, as well as unethical, self-serving efforts to undermine the mission of Black-led initiatives, while attempting to claim them as your own visions and ideas.

Our history is littered with stolen rights from our homeland to a strange land, from being a man, to being told we are only three-fifths of a man. From slavery to chattel. From running for freedom to freedom riders. From a document that declared us free, to a Jim Crow that locked us up and threw away the key.

From civil rights to voting rights. From housing rights to educational rights. From the right to sit anywhere we choose on a bus, then you cringe when we shine the light on what's happening to "Just Us."

PJALS and 30 partners call community to join post-election action

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane is planning for election response that rejects white nationalism, protects inclusive democracy, keeps the community safe, respects everyone's rights, ensures all votes are counted and demands results be respected, said director Liz Moore.

PJALS is collaborating with 30 community partners to create proactive strategies to keep communities of color and other targeted communities safe, and "to swear in a government of, by and for the people," she said.

A letter to community leaders calls for making sure "our region is a place that includes everyone and protects the right of every person to live, love, work and worship free from fear and bigotry."

"With the fear, anxiety, and sense of chaos that so many of us are feeling, being part of this work makes a big difference," she said noting that when politicians fear losing power, "they try to stoke fear and divide us, so we don't join together to demand the proven solutions all of our families need."

So PJALS and partners, including faith communities, are creating systems of information sharing and community response in case of white nationalist activity or hate incidents.

The letter recognizes the time leading up to and after this election is one of "extreme division," so signers believe it is important to speak clearly and collectively about the value of human rights, human dignity and human life over ideology.

Signers recognize some politicians have empowered white nationalists—stoking anti-semitism, Islamophobia, blaming Blacks, immigrants, religious minorities and anyone opposing their agenda of hate—who now threaten vigilante violence.

The letter says that paramilitary activities, intimidation and violence threaten inclusive democracy and civil society.

Concerned about the risk of violence whatever the election results are, the signers thank leaders who also "oppose the armed vigilantes roaming the streets." They urge law enforcement to challenge anyone inhibiting free speech and to stop private paramilitary units, which are illegal under Washington's constitution and laws.

They also call police not to turn the city into a war zone with use of weapons of war like tear gas—banned by the Geneva Convention—or repurposed military surplus equipment, uniforms, vehicles or weapons that encourage a "warrior mindset" in police, emphasizing violence over

relationship-building.

The letter says Spokane needs "public servants we can trust, not street warriors. From their uniforms to their equipment, police should be equipped for the job that is needed."

In addition to calling on leaders to make public commitments, PJALS suggests ways community members can take action.

PJALS is offering three webinar Wednesdays and four post-election seminars. Its video of the Bystander Intervention webinar is online. Webinar Wednesdays on Nov. 4 and 11 will offer collaborative ideas for working with community partners to create pro-active and responsive strategies to keep communities of color and other targeted communities safe, ensure votes are counted and respected.

With Eastern Washington University's Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies, PJALS is co-sponsoring a webinar on "White Supremacy, the 2020 Election and the Pacific Northwest," which has sessions from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Thursdays, Nov. 5 and 12, and Dec. 3.

Discussions will look at the role of white supremacy in framing debates, stoking fear and fomenting division. Scholar-activists from the Pacific North-

west will explore its impacts on the region in sessions on "White Power and Hater Studies," "Indigenous Studies" and "Immigration Studies."

For information, email judy.rohrer@ewu.edu.

The Showing Up for Racial Justice Committee continues to meet 2nd and 4th Thursdays to discuss books. It is now discussing *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. For information, email slichty@pjals.org.

The Peace and Justice Action Committee, which meets on zoom on first Thursdays, has joined with others to form the Spokane Advocacy Team with the Friends Committee on National Legislation's Advocacy Team Network. Its focus is to "End Endless War" related to policies on Iran.

Shar Lichty, organizer, reported that the virtual and in-person "Believing in the Yet to Be" Benefit exceeded its budget goals and welcomed 30 new members.

PJALS also has resources on how to prevent a coup, therapists' recommendations on election stress and dealing with burnout, and advice on talking with children and teens about uncertainty.

For information, call 838-7870 or visit pjals.org.

When does it stop?

As Ben Franklin once stated, "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are."

Therefore, we the Black clergy of Spokane, Washington pen this letter, not only to the White clergy of our city, but to all those who are reading this, whatever the location.

We say, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. penned in his letter from the Birmingham County Jail to the white clergy of his time: "In the end it will not be the words of our enemy that we will remember, but the silence of our friends."

You say you are "Beyond Words." Then we say, "We are Beyond Talk. We want action!"

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Calendar of Events

- Nov, Dec** • **Venture Outdoors!**, The Lands Council will post local outdoor adventure destinations each month for children, youth and families to visit – prizes – khall@landscouncil.org, thelandscouncil.org/adventure
- Nov 3, 10, 17, 24, 25, Dec 5, 12, 19** • **Festival of Fair Trade**, Community Building Lobby, noon to 5:30 p.m., “distanced” shopping one vendor and Kizuri.
- Nov 4** • **PJALS Post-Election Mobilization** Community Meeting, 7 to 8 p.m., Zoom, register for link <https://secure.everyaction.com/mHSgFAC4bk-3VG8X0txlzQ2>
- Nov 5** • **Peace and Justice Action** Committee, link from slichty@pjals.org
- **Spokane Human Rights Commission**, 5:30 p.m., email for info: ikissler@spokanecity.org
- **Whitworth Diversity Monologues** Fall 2020, rescheduled from April, 7 to 10:30 p.m., virtual, whitworth.edu/cms/administration/student-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/events/, adohi@whitworth.edu, 777-4572
- **“The New Leader: What 2020 Taught Us About How to Lead in 2021 (and After),”** conversation with best-selling author Chris Lowney, 6 to 7:30 p.m., gonzaga.edu/news-events/events/2020/11/5/chris-lowney
- Nov 5, 12 19, 26** • **Taizé Prayer** on Zoom, 4:15 p.m., for link: bartletts@gonzaga.edu
- Nov 5, 12, Dec 3** • **“White Supremacy, the 2020 Election and the Pacific Northwest”** webinar, Eastern Washington University’s Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies, 4 to 5:30 p.m., link from judy.rohrer@ewu.edu
- Nov 10, 24** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice** book discussion, *How to Be an Antiracist*, link from slichty@pjals.org
- Nov. 11** • **Hispanic Business Professional Association** Membership Meeting, David May, EWU interim president, 6 p.m., Zoom, for link email hbpaspokane@gmail.com
- **PJALS Post-Election Community Meeting II**, 7 to 8 p.m., Zoom, register for link: <https://secure.everyaction.com/MDWbF8HwIUeitHMJGb1eDg2>
- Nov 12** • **“What Happened?”** Post-Election Analysis with GU’s Political Science, Joe Gardner and Blain Garvin, 4 to 5 p.m., Zoom, taninchev@gonzaga.edu, gonzaga.edu/news-events/events/2020/11/12/what-happened-post-election-analysis
- **Simpson Duvall Lecture** with M. Antoni Ucerler, associate professor/director of Ricci Institute at the University of San Francisco, talk on Japan’s initial encounter with Christianity and crisis leading to its prohibition in 1614 and “hidden Christians” over two centuries, lecture on Zoom, jshanholtzer@whitworth.edu for Zoom link
- Nov 12, 26** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, link from slichty@pjals.org
- Nov 14-Dec 03** • **Virtual Spokane Fall Folk Festival**, list of performers and activities at www.spokanefolkfestival.org or facebook.com/Fall-Folk-Festival-Spokane
- Nov 15** • **“Rise Up Together,”** Faith Action Network Virtual Annual Dinner, statewide/Spokane, 5 p.m., social hour, 5:30 p.m. program, RSVP at bit.ly/FANDinner2020 by Nov. 13 for link
- Nov 16** • **Spokane NAACP Virtual General Meeting**, 7 to 9 p.m., facebook.com/spokane.naacp, tspokanenaacp@gmail.com
- Nov 17** • **“Contemporary Native American Lives: COVID, Sovereignty and Native Youth Leadership,”** virtual lecture with Laurie Arnold of the Sinixt Band, Colville Confederated Tribes and director of Native American Studies at Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., link from ebrown21@my.whitworth.edu, whitworthaswu.com, 777-4788
- Nov 17, 18** • **“Planning Today for a Safer Tomorrow: Disability in Emergency Preparedness Conference,”** Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hBGH8rZDTAuuVBclp8liZQ
- Nov 17, 18, 19** • **Corporate Kick Off** Salvation Army Kettle Season, contactless community fundraiser at red kettle sites by businesses, 329-2721
- Nov 20** • **Whitworth’s International Club** live broadcast of pre-recorded video of the International Festival 2020 to groups of 30 or less in Beeksma Family Theology Center Sanctuary, Eric Johnson Science Center 233, Hixson Union Building MPR, Weyerhaeuser Hall Room 107, 6 p.m., 777-4721, btuladhar22@my.whitworth.edu, whitworth.campusgroups.com/intl/home/
- Nov 20-Dec 24** • **Salvation Army’s Christmas Red Kettle Campaign** outside businesses
- Nov 27-Dec 13** • **Tree of Sharing**, online and at Riverpark Square, Northtown and Valley malls, 808-4919
- Nov 27-Jan 2** • **Winterfest: Celebration** of Holiday Traditions, Grand Opening, Northtown Mall; display of hand-crafted lanterns, holiday trees hand-painted by local artists to represent various cultures at Mirabeau Park Hotel and Convention Center main entrance, charity@thefamilyguide.org
- Dec 2** • **The Fig Tree mailing** and distribution, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., east entrance off S. Ivory, 10 a.m.
- **Virtual Around the Table**, World Relief Spokane, 7 p.m., for link: worldreliefspokane.org/aroundthetable2020
- Dec 3** • **The Fig Tree Benefit/Development** Zoom meeting, noon
- **The Fig Tree Board** Zoom meeting, 1 p.m.

Compiled with the assistance of Yvonne Montoya Zamora

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Small businesses connect to create more equitable, resilient economy

Mariah McKay combines her commitments to community organizing, social justice and business equity in her work with the Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA), a nonprofit association she founded in 2017 to organize consumers, businesses and partners to create a more equitable, resilient local economy.

The vision is to pull together locally-owned, values-driven for-profit and nonprofit businesses that seek to measure their success based on their quadruple bottom line, meaning their impact on people, profit, planet and policy.

“We do not discriminate between for-profit and nonprofit businesses because we believe both corporate models create social impact,” she said. “We seek to eliminate racial and wealth disparities in business ownership, distributing ownership throughout our economy, rather than having one entity or a few own most businesses.”

“We seek to reform and change the current economy to one that creates more equitable and shared opportunities,” said Mariah. “We would like to democratize the workplace.”

“Too many businesses are run like tyrannies, but we promote a worker leadership-sharing model that unlocks potential for collective thriving, rather than a few thriving.”

SIMBA has about 100 members—businesses and consumers. Individuals contribute at least \$5, and businesses have a sliding scale based on three tiers of benefits in five categories: marketing, customer development, networking, technical assistance and advocacy.

“The benefit of belonging is clear in this COVID crisis. Many businesses thought they were doing fine or were stuck in a routine, but COVID disrupted their operations,” Mariah said. “They realize if they do not organize collectively, it may diminish their ability to stay in business.”

With funds from the CARES Act, SIMBA launched an education campaign on the importance



Mariah McKay helps coalesce interests of businesses.

of supporting local businesses when possible, rather than chain stores, online giants or monopolies. The part distributed in Spokane helps small businesses access e-commerce for online sales. Funds are also going for one-on-one consulting to troubleshoot on 12 topics, including accounting, human resources and grant sources, she said.

SIMBA made recordings on those topics, so businesses can listen to them online. It also hosts an online marketplace listing goods and services people can buy through PayPal, business websites or other means.

“It’s an online Main Street, where customers can discover local businesses collectively marketing in competition with mega-businesses,” Mariah said.

In September, the City of Spokane funded the Live Local Campaign. It launched Oct. 13. The campaign includes an online shopping marketplace, livelocalinw.com. Nearly 500 businesses that signed up include retailers, restaurants and service providers.

“**We need local** collaboration to respond to national monopolies and COVID, so local businesses survive individually and thrive together,” she said.

SIMBA leads the Live Local coalition with the Inland Northwest Business Alliance, North Monroe Business District,

Garfield Business District, South Perry Business Association, Spokane Arts and the Multi-Ethnic Business Association.

Mariah has a stake in Spokane, though she left after graduating in 2002 from the mainstream Mead High School and M.E.A.D. Alternative High School. Her great-grandfather moved to Spokane from Montana in the 1930s. Her father, an electrical engineer, married her mother, who moved to Spokane to study at Whitworth University and taught elementary school.

“**In high school, I was part** of a religious minority, the only Unitarian Universalist in either school,” said Mariah, whose faith shaped her early commitment to community organizing and social justice.

In high school, she was president of the school diversity club, which promoted inclusivity and fought hate speech against LGBTQ students. She was a percussionist in band, on the speech and debate team, and in the environment club.

“I could not have stood up

for issues without the backing of the Unitarian Universalist Church,” she said. “It gave me the example of being human and living in community with a different world view.”

Mariah decided to go away for college to study biochemistry at Reed College in Portland, graduating in 2006. There she found emphasis on a systems approach to understanding the world.

“I went to study science to understand human behavior, but gradually realized my passion for creating social change by challenging social, racial and economic injustice,” she said.

In Mead, a suburb, she had not experienced Spokane as an urban culture, at least not like what she found in Portland. She thought it was unfair Spokane lacked the resources Portland had for a cosmopolitan urban life where young people could connect.

When she moved back, her mother had moved to downtown Spokane, and Mariah came to work with KYRS, where she discovered Spokane does have a diverse urban life.

“I could see myself living in Spokane and being a community member for the first time,” said Mariah, who became involved in local political causes and community development. From 2008 to 2011, she worked at Community Minded Enterprises after the bottom fell out of the economy, “heisted by the one percent,” she said. Programs to improve health care, youth concerns and other programs were de-funded.

“Potential work for improving the community collapsed because the economy was allowed to enrich a few at the expense of all,” she said.

That propelled Mariah into state politics, where she found a stalemate between Republi-

cans and Democrats. She was a legislative aide in 2011 with then Rep. Lisa Brown. She also worked three years with Washington CAN (Community Action Network), first in Olympia and after 2014 in Spokane.

She returned to Spokane believing grassroots change was necessary for political change. With CAN, she served on 17 local, state and federal campaigns for legislative reform on immigration, health care and tax policy.

She learned that people with less to lose—people of color, low-income and marginalized individuals—can work together to be powerful agents of change by sharing their stories and learning to employ effective community organizing techniques.

Seeing no path for advancement with CAN headquartered in Seattle, she worked three years with the Spokane Regional Health District in the health promotion division of the Healthy Communities Team on Walk-Bike-Bus and Safe Routes to School.

“At CAN, we lacked funds and relied on people power. At the health district, we had funds to create positive behavior change campaigns, but we weren’t empowered to address root causes,” Mariah said.

After the 2016 election, she realized she wanted to use her skills, not in local government but in building a values-driven business coalition in Eastern Washington.

In November 2017, she began interviewing local business owners to find what benefits and services they might want from a membership organization. She formed SIMBA as a nonprofit in March 2018.

For information, call 939-0015.

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