



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

February 2023 No.85

Dear Friends,

This 85th Edition of ERC Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations, refugees and people seeking asylum and environmental justice.

Today February 24th 2023 as we mark the 1st anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine let us reflect on what Pope Francis has called an “absurd and cruel war” and continue to pray for peace and non-violence in our world.

May we never forget those in this broken world for whom we strive to make things better. One must never lose hope and continue to hold dear to Blessed Edmund Rice's three main tenets: **COMPASSION LIBERATION & PRESENCE**

If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving, you lose that courage to be, the quality that helps you to go on in spite of all. And so today I still have a dream. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Please note that if you come up against a paywall in any of the articles below - please contact me at: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org and I will send you the full article.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace & Blessings

Marita

**Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.



Linda Burney says more needs to be done to close the gap. (ABC News: Ian Cutmore)

On the 15th anniversary of the apology to the Stolen Generations, federal government unveils \$424 million Closing the Gap plan
Stephanie Dalzell, ABC News, 13th February 2023

The federal government has acknowledged there has been an "enormous failure" in attempts to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, as it unveils a fresh national plan and hundreds of millions of dollars of funding aimed at improving life outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Key points:

- The 2022 Closing the Gap Report showed limited progress on key targets for improving life outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- Part of the government's plan will provide clean drinking water for remote communities
- Indigenous Australians Minister Linda Burney says a Voice to Parliament will also be "fundamental" to closing the gap

On the 15th anniversary of then-prime minister Kevin Rudd's historic apology to the Stolen Generations, the government has released its Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, with \$424 million in new money to address indigenous disadvantage across areas such as housing, food, education and water infrastructure.

The national apology in 2008 was an acknowledgement of how successive governments had failed Indigenous Australians, and a commitment to do better.

However, with the 2022 Closing the Gap Report showing limited progress on key targets for improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people, Indigenous Australians Minister Linda Burney conceded that promise had not been honoured.

"I think governments have tried but there is enormous failure in meeting all the closing the gap targets," Ms Burney said.

"More needs to be done to close the gap."

Ms Burney said the implementation plan was aimed at delivering real change, with \$150 million over four years going towards creating water infrastructure for communities that do not have access to clean drinking water.

"I think it would be a shock to many people that there are many communities — remote Aboriginal communities in Australia — that do not have clean drinking water and cannot have dialysis because the water is not clean enough for the dialysis machines, despite the fact that renal failure is such an issue in our communities," she said.

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Voice 'fundamental' to closing the gap

Alongside the implementation plan, Ms Burney believes a Voice to Parliament is also "fundamental" in tackling Indigenous disadvantage.

"It's going to mean there will be Aboriginal voices, advising the parliament on what we need to do to do things like close the gap," she said.

"This is going to be a monumental opportunity for all Australians, to have a say in meeting the aspirations of Aboriginal people and closing those gaps."

Read full story:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-13/closing-the-gap-plan-unveiled-424-million/101963816>

What's Indigenous sovereignty and can a Voice extinguish it?

Jack Latimore, Sydney Morning Herald, February 9th 2023

The concept of sovereignty goes back millennia – for many different cultures. What does it mean in Australia today

A key concern for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders about the Voice to parliament is whether enshrining the body in the Australian Constitution – or recognising Indigenous peoples in any way in the nation's founding document – extinguishes the sovereignty of First Nations people.

There's a lot of confusion, misunderstanding and misconception around questions of sovereignty. It's a complex and contested legal principle, and knowing what sovereignty is and how it interacts with First Nations sovereignty rights requires digesting a plethora of dense texts about the Constitution, including case law and government-commissioned reports. It's not as simple as some activists would have you believe.

So what is sovereignty and how did the British settlers assume it over Australia? What is the First Nations sovereignty movement and what does it want? And how, if at all, will an

Indigenous Voice, or a treaty, affect it?

What did sovereignty look like in 1770?

When the British Crown's imperial agents on HMB Endeavour first sighted New Holland on April 19, 1770, they recorded their observations. On board was a nine-man contingent of gentleman scientists led by the influential naturalist and botanist Joseph Banks. Banks and several others from the academy maintained journals, as did the commander of the voyage, Lieutenant James Cook and other seamen.

Over nine days, as the ship made its way north searching for anchorage to take on fresh water and provisions, they profiled the coast and shoreline, noting the conspicuous landmarks and recording the presence of the Aboriginal people of this so-called "unknown" land.

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What does 'Indigenous sovereignty' mean?

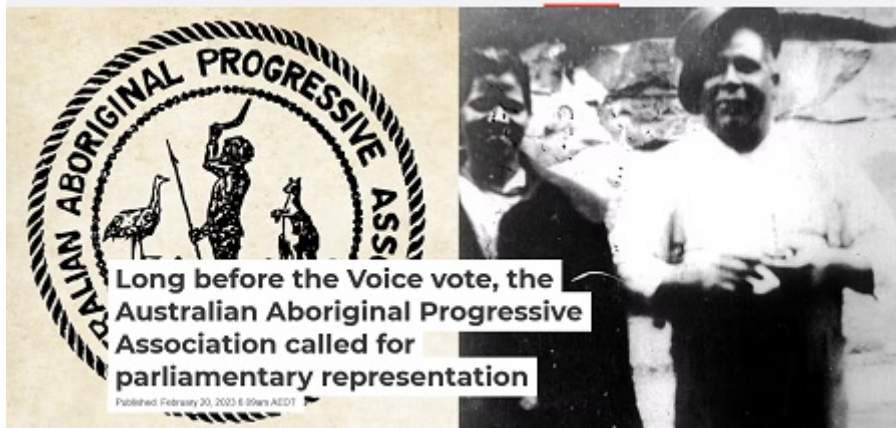
Today, Indigenous sovereignty is understood to be inherent rights deriving from spiritual and historical connections to land. Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson – an academic and Goenpul woman from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), Quandamooka First Nation (Moreton Bay) – writes that "since spiritual belief is completely integrated into human daily activity, the powers that guide and direct the earth are believed to exist with all human life". The first owners of the land were ancestral beings whose "creativity and incorporation into the land provides the basis for our sovereignty".

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The understanding of Indigenous sovereignty was not extinguished by conquest, discovery, domination, force or acquiescence and, as the High Court later found in the Mabo decision, the job was also not done by the 19th-century legal doctrine of terra nullius – or "nobody's land" – which had been retrofitted to the Australian landscape.

Read full article:

https://www.smh.com.au/national/what-s-indigenous-sovereignty-and-can-a-voice-extinguish-it-20230113-p5ccdk.html?utm_content=in_case_you_missed_it&list_name=2F18B764-6607-4DC4-8A1A-893AF9A72AA4&promote_channel=edmail&utm_campaign=note-from-the-editor-smh&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=2023-02-10&mbnr=MTI0OTlwNzI&instance=2023-02-10-15-40-AEDT&jobid=29522953



John Maynard, Author provided

Long before the Voice vote, the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association called for parliamentary representation

John Maynard, The Conversation, 20th February 2023

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this article contains names and/or images of deceased people.

The most startling point on the referendum for a Voice to parliament is the fact the majority of people in this country have no idea of history. And I mean both Black and white people.

Australian history, as written for nearly two thirds of the 20th century, glorified discoverers, explorers, settlers, and Gallipoli. We as Aboriginal people had been conveniently erased from the historical landscape and memory. Most Australians gave Aboriginal people little or no consideration. The majority of Aboriginal people were trapped in a historical vacuum through the fact that great numbers of our people had been confined to heavily congested and controlled missions and reserves.

As part of this confinement, we were encouraged to forget our past. Everyday decisions were removed from people; they were told what to eat, what to wear, who you could marry, and their movement was severely restricted. There was a process of historical erasure and memory.

We were to be severed from any sense of past or inspiration. We could not participate in ceremonies, speak our language, tell our stories, practice songs and dances or conduct our everyday hunting and living experiences. Over time our people could only remember the controlled life on the reserve. It became the pattern of misery.

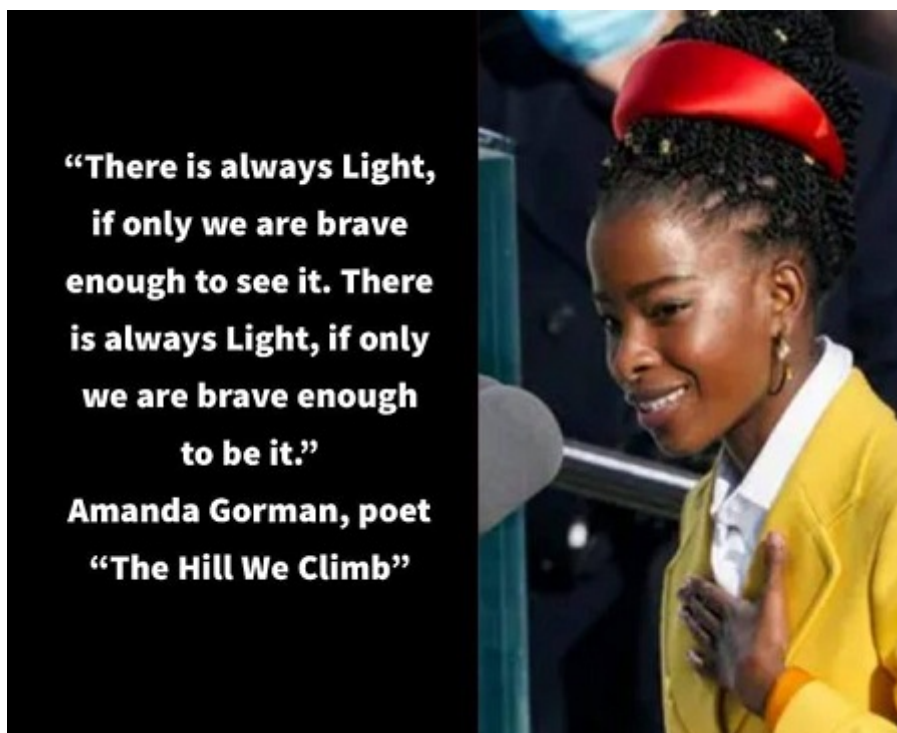
In his 1968 Boyer lecture, *After the Dreaming*, anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner exposed Australia's failure to regard, record or acknowledge Aboriginal people in the country's history. Australian history, he said, had been constructed with:

a view from a window which had been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape.

What is critically important in history understanding is that the call for a Voice to parliament is not a new initiative. Aboriginal activists nearly 100 years ago first called for a voice to parliament as part of their political platform and demands during the 1920s.

Read full story:

https://theconversation.com/long-before-the-voice-vote-the-australian-aboriginal-progressive-association-called-for-parliamentary-representation-198064?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%202023%20-%202548525608&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%202023%20-%202548525608+CID_61bee97806e81d25edb5809730d4262f&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Long%20before%20the%20Voice%20vote%20the%20Australian%20Aboriginal%20Progressive%20Association%20called%20for%20parliamentary%20representation





Zaki Haidari: 'Australians have embraced again the idea that compassion isn't a limited resource.' Photograph: Dean Lewins/AAP

With the latest visa decision I hope we're done with a mean-spirited period in Australian history

***Zaki Haidari**, The Guardian, 14th February 2023**

I'm sharing tears of joy with friends on temporary visas who now have certainty, but there is sorrow for those who are not eligible

When I received the news late on Sunday night that the visa class I'm on is being scrapped so I can apply to stay in Australia permanently, I went straight to social media. I had to tell my network the news as soon as possible because I could hardly believe it was happening.

Then the phone calls started. I was soon sharing tears with friends who have spent too long receiving bad news – we couldn't comprehend that we would finally have certainty and agency over our futures.

I spoke to mothers and fathers who will call their children and partners and tell them that they will be reunited and safe. I can imagine that conversation and how proud and joyful that call would be – a parent being able to offer their families what we all crave: safety and a future.

It really says something that the announcement by the government that a cohort of about 19,000 people currently on temporary protection visas (TPVs) and safe haven enterprise visas (SHEVs) can now apply for permanency is being celebrated as a victory. It was, after all, the fulfilment of an election promise for which the Albanese government received a mandate from the Australian people at the ballot box last May.

It says a lot about the disgusting and cruel state of policy towards people seeking asylum over the past 30 years that the bare minimum of honouring human rights conventions we committed to in 1951 is the cause of such celebration.

And it is most definitely a celebration for the 19,000 people who, like me, have been living from visa application to visa application for a decade. For them, today my heart is full. They will be able to plan for a future, to borrow

money to buy their own homes or to start a business, just as they always should have been able.

But I haven't forgotten about the other people whose fate is subject to the arbitrary application of visa classes. There are at least 1,000 people who will "never ever" be allowed to call Australia home. Only those who entered Australia before Operation Sovereign Borders started in 2013 who hold or have applied for a protection visa are eligible.

**Zaki Haidari fled Afghanistan as a teenager. He is now a campaigner at Amnesty International Australia*

Read full story:

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/13/with-the-latest-visa-decision-i-hope-were-done-with-a-mean-spirited-period-in-australian-history?utm_term=63eadd17ca859167f86763d6aeee804d&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email



The independent MP Zoe Daniel says she is concerned 'people with a series of low-level offences' will be 'caught up' in the approach 'designed to protect the community from serious offenders'. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

Australian government urged to 'stop playing with people's lives' as people returned to detention

Ben Doherty, Daniel Hust & Paul Karp, The Guardian, 19th February 2023

Dozens of people released from immigration detention due to federal court ruling now told they will be re-detained

Lawyers have called on the Australian government to "stop playing with people's lives" as it moves to re-detain dozens of people who were released from immigration detention over Christmas.

About 160 people had been released from detention due to a full federal court case ruling that aggregate sentences do not count for the purposes of the Migration Act's automatic visa-cancellation provisions.

An aggregate sentence refers to when a person is given a single sentence for more than one offence.

Rather than appeal, the Albanese government pushed legislation through parliament restoring its original interpretation. It passed the Senate with the Coalition's support on Monday despite outcry from refugee and asylum seeker groups about its retrospective provisions.

Dozens of people whose visas were affected by the bill are now being told they will be re-detained. Crossbench MPs and lawyers have raised concerns about the impact on individuals with a series of low-level offences.

"These are some of the hardest conversations I've ever had with clients," said Rachel Saravanamuthu, a senior solicitor at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

"People have just begun to rebuild their lives – reunite with family, start new jobs and have hope for their future. All of their dreams have been ripped away so suddenly and they are devastated."

Read full story:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/19/australian-government-urged-to-stop-playing-with-peoples-lives-as-people-returned-to-detention>



Camels on Nullabor (at bottom right) supplied by State Library of South Australia B-7953. Other images are family photographs, supplied by author.

I'm descended from a Baloch-Afghan cameleer and a Badimiya Yamitji woman: they battled racist government policies to save our family

Sabah Rind, The Conversation, 20th February 2023

I am one of 400 descendants of a Baloch-Afghan cameleer man, Goolam Badoo, and an Aboriginal Badimiya Yamitji woman, Mariam Martin.

As I share these stories told to me by my Elders, I pray they are used as a means for others to recognise the resilience in these historical lessons as a vessel for good action. As humans, we should be naturally inclined towards

performing good acts in service of humanity.

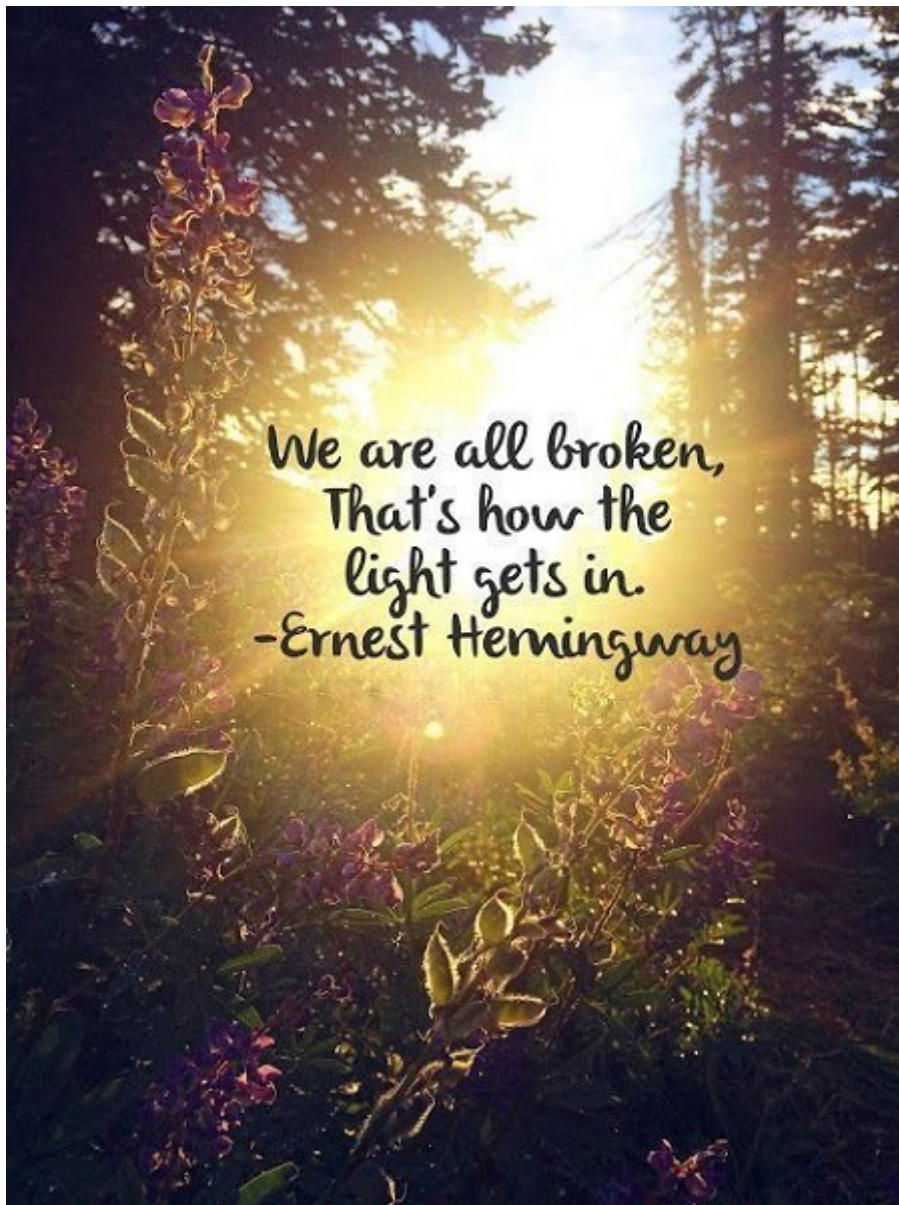
In Islam, this concept is called fitrah, the natural predisposition to incline towards right action and submission to the Creator. In our faith, we are also taught that deeds are rewarded by their intentions and sincerity.

As I write this piece, I do so with the sincere intention that my words penetrate living hearts and provide a means of coming together to serve humanity in good action.

To me, as a fourth-generation descendent of an Afghan Baloch cameleer, the Uluru Statement represents an opportunity to come together and walk hand in hand as we build this country, with the same spirit as my great-grandfather.

Read full story:

https://theconversation.com/im-descended-from-a-baloch-afghan-cameleer-and-a-badimiya-yamitji-woman-they-battled-racist-government-policies-to-save-our-family-199409?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%202023%20-%202548525608&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%202023%20-%202548525608+CID_61bee97806e81d25edb5809730d4262f&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Im%20descended%20from%20a%20Baloch-Afghan%20cameleer%20and%20a%20Badimiya%20Yamitji%20woman%20they%20battled%20racist%20government%20policies%20to%20save%20our%20family



Claire Anterea has waved goodbye to numerous friends and family members who left Kiribati for jobs in Australia. Source:

Instagram / @greenpeacepcj

Claire's family and friends have moved to Australia. She'd never considered joining them, until now

It's believed that without serious and rapid action to tackle climate change, millions could be forced to move within their own countries. But for people from small, low-lying island nations, relocating overseas may be their only option.

Key Points:

- Australia will introduce a permanent residency option for Pacific islanders this year.
- Some in the Pacific had never considered moving to Australia, but climate change fears are causing them to rethink.
- Pacific leaders are concerned about mass departures of skilled professionals and climate migration.

Over the years, Claire Anterea has waved goodbye to numerous friends and family members as they left the Pacific island nation of Kiribati for jobs in regional powerhouse Australia.

She had never considered joining them - until now.

Australia will introduce a permanent residency option for Pacific islanders this year, and has also expanded its short-term labour program - part of the country's wider efforts to counter China's growing influence in the region.

If our people are affected by sea level rise, we don't have a place to go," Ms Anterea told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from her home in Kiribati's capital, Tarawa.

"This life for me is good, but what about my daughter? For the sake of my child, I want to migrate and to get a job and contribute to a new home," she added.

Read full story:

[https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/claires-family-and-friends-have-moved-to-australia-shed-never-considered-joining-them-until-now/22I59euec?dlb=\[2023/02/21\]%20del_newspm_bau&did=DM22327&cid=sbsnews:edm:acnewspm:relation:news:na:na](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/claires-family-and-friends-have-moved-to-australia-shed-never-considered-joining-them-until-now/22I59euec?dlb=[2023/02/21]%20del_newspm_bau&did=DM22327&cid=sbsnews:edm:acnewspm:relation:news:na:na)



Environment: It's a wonderful world ...

Peter Sainsbury, Pearls & Irritations, January 29th 2023

... as Louis Armstrong famously croaked. Well, perhaps: The temperature's going up. The rich are getting richer. Wetlands are disappearing. Gas is officially green.

2022 sixth hottest on record

It's hard not to keep telling the same old stories but keeping an eye on the global temperature is rather like keeping an eye on your blood pressure. When something crucial to your welfare is going out of control, it's important to measure it regularly to see what's happening. And managing global warming is just like managing high blood pressure: if you don't take corrective measures, it'll keep going up and up.

The 2022 average across the globe was 0.86oC higher than the 20th century average – that's the 20th century note, not the pre-industrial period. And remember that La Niña was dominant in 2021 and 2022. If, as predicted, we're moving into an El Niño phase we can expect there to be a marked increase in the global average temperature in the next couple of years. The graph below very clearly demonstrates that over the last 70 years during El Niños (red) the temperature goes up, and during La Niñas (blue) it goes down.

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Bloomberg's six climate breakthroughs of 2022

Talking of the ex-Mayor of New York, despite last year's climate induced catastrophes, the never-ending climate policy shilly-shallying of governments, the greenwashing by the private sector, and increasing greenhouse gas emissions even after 30 years of international climate negotiations, Bloomberg has identified six 'encouraging developments' during the year:

1. Biden's US\$374 billion climate action package (the incongruously named Inflation Reduction Act) was passed by Congress despite looking dead in the water;
2. The European Union's 27 members agreed to establish a Carbon Border

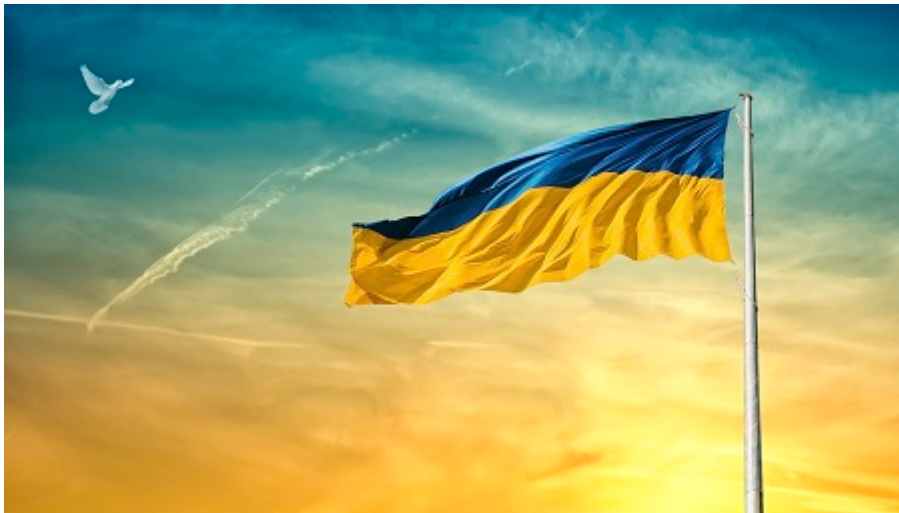
Adjustment Mechanism that will tax imports to the EU from countries that have not put a price on carbon;

3. Agreement by 195 nations at the UN Biodiversity Conference in Canada (COP15) to protect and restore at least 30% of the Earth's land and water area by 2030. Rich nations also agreed to pay US\$30 billion per year by 2030 to poorer nations to help them with the task;
4. At the better-known climate COP meeting in Egypt (COP27), the world's wealthy countries finally agreed to establish a loss and damage fund (details still to be negotiated) to help poorer nations deal with the human, social, financial and infrastructure damages already being caused to them by climate change;
5. The election of more climate-friendly governments in Australia and Brazil and reestablishment of cooperation on climate action by the USA and China;
6. Increasing international support for reducing methane emissions.

According to Bloomberg, from these developments emerged 'a clear pathway of climate hope', which I suppose is pretty much what I'd say if my business depended on generating widespread optimism so that financial markets keep making lots of money for people who already have lots.

Read full story

<https://johnmenadue.com/environment-its-a-wonderful-world/>



Pax Christi International Declaration on the War in Ukraine: One Year after the Russian Invasion

“Let us look at all those civilians whose killing was considered ‘collateral damage.’ Let us ask the victims themselves. Let us think of the refugees and displaced... the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories... look at reality through their eyes...In this way, we will be able to grasp the

abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace.” – Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 2020, par. 261.

One year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Pax Christi International expresses our deep concern for countless victims of a war that has led to death, injury, displacement, trauma, and ecological harm. This war has generated almost 6 million internally displaced persons and 8 million refugees; killed more than 7,200 civilians including over 400 children and hundreds of thousands of soldiers; and caused generational trauma.

The war of aggression against Ukraine has clearly demonstrated that no international authority exists with sufficient wisdom to effectively address the root causes or with adequate means to have prevented Russia’s brutal invasion. International law provides every sovereign nation with the right to self-defense. In a world of highly destructive weapons, armed self-defense may trigger an escalation to extremes that can even lead to a nuclear war.

For this reason, Pax Christi International urgently calls on the international community to immediately facilitate diplomatic initiatives, to restore the international order and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We plead with Russia and Ukraine to enter negotiations directly, on neutral ground, and with a mutually agreeable mediator.

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“The Russian invasion of Ukraine is inflicting untold suffering on the Ukrainian people, with profound global implications. The prospects for peace keep diminishing. The chances of further escalation and bloodshed keep growing. I fear the world is not sleepwalking into a wider war.

I fear it is doing so with its eyes wide open.”

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres (6 February 2023)

If we want to reap the harvest of peace and justice in the future, we will have to sow seeds of nonviolence here and now, in the present.”
Mairead Maguire | Irish Peace Activist and Nobel Peace Laureate

Read full Declaration:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm&ogbl#all/FMfcgzGrcjQCPIZknSfWpJBMrGCKBBCW?projector=1>

REFLECTIONS

MAYA ANGELOU

She said, "I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision. I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one. I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. People love a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back. I've learned that I still have a lot to learn. I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

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Jamberoo Abbey Facebook Post 22nd February 2023

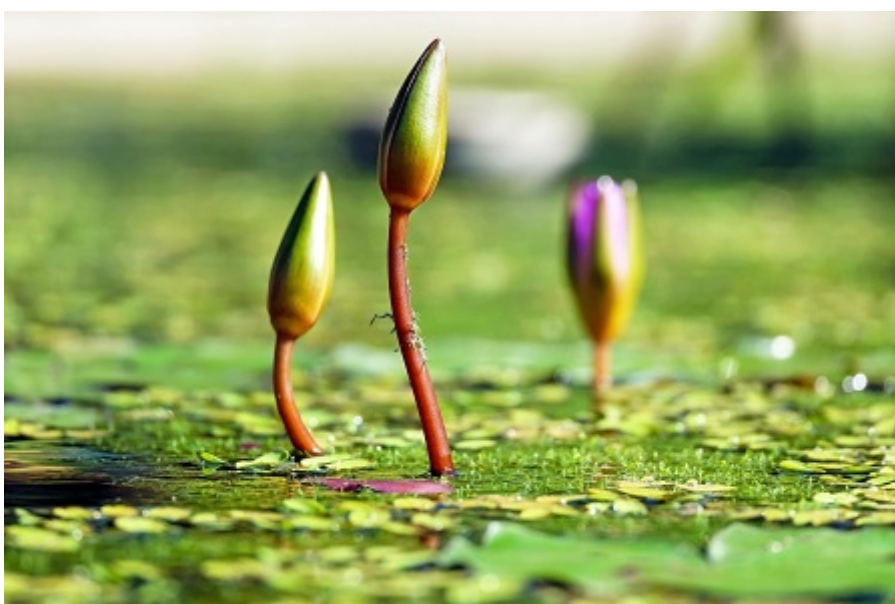
Ash Wednesday

"It is a strange anointing, this cross that comes to mark us as Lent begins. Ashes, dust, dirt: the stuff we walk upon, that we sweep away, that we work to get rid of, now comes to remind us who we are, where we are from, where we are bound.

How terrible. And how marvelous, that God should feel so tender toward the dust as to create us from it, and return us to it, breathing through us all the while. Even after releasing us from the blessed dust at the last, God continues to breathe us toward whatever it is we are becoming."

Jan Richardson

Let us pray for one another in all our "becoming" this Lent.



Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

"Our imaginations have been dulled into believing the inevitability of violence. We have come to think that only violence will either make us safe or prevent the bad guys from harming us and those we love. This is a lie. It is a lie in the first place because violence does not end violence; it only creates endless cycles of violence." Emmanuel Katongole

"The Goddess-centered art we have been examining, with its striking absence of images of male domination or warfare, seems to have reflected a social order in which women, first as heads of clans and priestesses and later on in other important roles, played a central part, and in which both men and women worked together in equal partnership for the common good. If there was no glorification of wrathful male deities or rulers carrying thunderbolts or arms . . . it is not unreasonable to infer it was because there were no counterparts for those images in real life."

Riane Eisler, The Chalice And The Blade

“One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these—to be fierce and to show mercy toward others; both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it. If you would help to calm the tumult, this is one of the strongest things you can do.” Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes

“We are not 'guilty bystanders' of life—we are involved in it. We are part of it. We share in it. We rejoice in life. What I love about [Chief Seattle's] description of inner fire . . . is that as you look deeper into it, you understand what inner fire builds in you: an unbreakable will, a capacity to stand in the face of any obstacles, and also that it nourishes the feeling of aliveness.” Veronica Pelicaric

“Many people claim that the protest movement has been crushed. But just because there are no street protests, it doesn't mean that the momentum has been lost.” Ruba Al-Hassani, on the October Movement in Iraq



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.

Our mailing address is:

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