

Peaceways

CENTRAL KENTUCKY COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Thoughts on Orlando

by Don Pratt

It's ironic, sad and damnable that the memory of Muhammad Ali's stance for peace and unity, recently in the news has been replaced by the violence and hate of one man's rampage in Orlando, Florida.

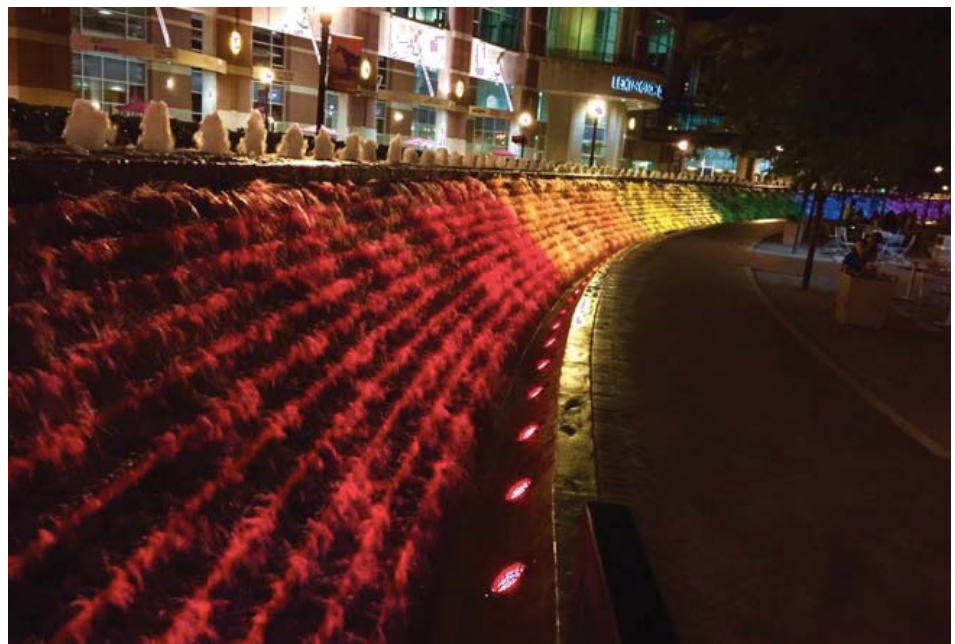
The day after these murders, there was a vigil in Lexington's Triangle Park in memory of those killed in Orlando. The speakers included Mayor Jim Gray, Lexington police chief Mark Barnard, Muslim leader Jamil Farooqi, and a prayer from a Christian minister. Speakers offered words of sympathy; commitments of support and security for Lexington's LGBTQ community, especially with the Pride event coming up; and clarity that the murders were not Islamic.

The Lexington crowd was primarily gay, mainly male, and overwhelmingly white. It reminded me of the largely African-American turn-out for our city's annual Martin Luther King Day festivities. All Lexingtonians should be joining those who are OUR family, our sisters and brothers, our kids, our neighbors, in such a gathering to grieve this loss.

For those of us who have been victims of gun violence, the resurrection of memories of our own being murdered is particularly hard. In fact, the mass shooting at the Sandy Hook elementary school was just as hard, maybe harder, for me as a parent of so many kids.

Given continuing access to weapons like the one(s) media report the shooter purchased the week before the mass killings at the Orlando night club, the future is not promising. I want change for our sake, for our kids' safety, for the sakes of all differing communities', and even for those we don't know or identify with today. Tomorrow, it may be them or it may be us. Security and peace cannot be guaranteed with weapons. Security and peace are guaranteed by our ability to conquer fear.

Don is a Lexington community activist.



United in Solidarity

Reprinted from the PCSO website

The Pride Community Services Organization (PCSO) in Lexington would like to express its deepest sympathies and condolences for the victims of the senseless act of violence that took place at Pulse Night Club in Orlando, Florida. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims, their friends, and their families. The PCSO stands united in solidarity with the various organizations and members of the Lexington pride community in support of the LGBTQ+ community of Orlando, that has been so shaken by this evil act.

As the LGBTQ+ community has made great strides in the legal arena over the past several years, we do realize that we need to remain vigilant in bringing society around to a greater understanding of, acceptance, and respect for all human rights and dignities. Whether this act was random or targeted toward the LGBTQ+ community, a terrorist attack or a domes-

tic mass shooting, it is important that our community comes together to heal and work on ways to move forward rather than act out of anger and fear by singling out any specific group.

At times like these, it is important to show that, although our community can be shaken, we cannot be broken. We stand together, we are one!

Gun Violence In America as of 6-28-16 (excluding suicide)

	2015	
Killed	13,293	
Wounded	26,826	
	2016	
Killed	6,614	
Wounded	13,654	

Source: www.gunviolencearchive.org

Safe Summer Lexington meets at Bethel

by Mary Ann Ghosal

The first community-wide meeting of Safe Summer Lexington was held on June 13 at Iglesia Hispana Bethel. Dr. Alberto Carrillo, senior pastor of the church, welcomed about 40 people who attended, representing churches, local agencies, neighborhoods, the police department and such community groups as Moms Demand Action, Girl Scouts and the Job Corps.

Safe Summer Lexington's main goal is to keep Lexington's youth safe until they return to school in the fall. The group plans to accomplish this goal by sharing a wide range of current community efforts to prevent and reduce violence, and by celebrating a mutual commitment to a safer Lexington by jointly participating in Lexington's Fourth of July Parade. In the longer term they hope to identify a group of young men and women, especially youth leaders, to receive formal training in the means of Nonviolent Social Change. They also hope to begin working on a plan to confront and change local conditions that contribute to violence and put our youth and young adults at risk. The group leaders expect that the plan will take two to three years to create.

Rev. William Saunders of the Lexington NAACP noted that Lexington had its "Ferguson incident" twenty years ago with the shooting of Tony Sullivan. Since that time, he said, police and community relations have improved, but identified such strategies as job training, better programs for youth, and reduced poverty that Lexington must address to help prevent violence.

Meredith Swim, representing Green Dot, a group that uses peer intervention to prevent violence, encouraged participants to take advantage of their free training. Green Dot emphasizes the positive role bystanders can take when they see something ugly developing.

Kerby Neill of CKCPJ described community efforts led by Brother Damon Muhammad's group, Justice or Else, and Logan Avritt with Motivated All Day Everyday (MADE). Both focus on youth and young adults at high risk for involvement in criminal or violent activity and organize around economic and education issues. Attendees shared the experiences they have had addressing problems and the expertise that can contribute to the current efforts. Police officers who were present described their community connections,

including the neighborhoods where they grew up and where they, friends and family live.

Chief Mark Barnard stressed that persons at risk for criminal activity will change only in the context of personal relationships, and such change will require the commitment of many people. He acknowledged the department's need for community members who know how to intervene with people in their neighborhoods, and stressed the need to address the achievement gap and the serious hurdles faced by youth who are not successful readers by third grade.

"Big Mike" Johnson challenged the group to recognize that most people around the table and their programs won't reach the youth most likely to be involved in serious violence. Only people with experience in the streets are truly able to connect with these young people, he said, although others recognized that some very street-wise people currently work in the community.

Larry Johnson, coordinator of the Lexington's program for Substance Abuse and Violence Intervention, summed up a number of the comments and offered details about the Fourth of July Parade. He has arranged for a number of groups to walk behind the Safe Summer Lexington



This beautiful afghan was created and donated to CKCPJ by a group of knitters who belong to the Lexington Friends. It will be the winning item at a silent auction that will be part of the CKCPJ September Potluck scheduled for Sept. 14. Photographer Steve Pavey will make the keynote presentation, describing his experience with the Artists' Solidarity Pilgrimage for Peace. Make plans now to attend!

.....
ton banner without paying the normal fee for parade participation. He encouraged groups that were already registered to keep their registration since the parade committee depends on a sufficient number of paid participants to cover their expenses.

..... If you shop at Kroger, you can support CKCPJ

The number of supporters who have linked their Kroger purchases to CKCPJ almost doubled in the first quarter of 2016 from four to seven. Thanks to everyone who took those few minutes to connect their Kroger Plus card to the Community Rewards program.

If you are a Kroger shopper and would like to participate, please grab your Kroger Plus card and sign in to krogercommunityrewards.com. You will be prompted to link your card to a non-profit in the region, and if you would like to support CKCPJ please use the registration number 16439. Please note that CKCPJ changed its address several months ago to 1588 Leestown Rd. Ste. 130-138, Lexington KY 40511.

We have also been assured by Kroger that the company, including the Community Rewards Program, is committed to its policy of never sharing a customer's

personal information. The privacy policy is key to Kroger's ability to support local organizations like CKCPJ.

We don't need much, but we do need a little bit to make sure that we are able to both keep the organization solvent and to underwrite the requests for funds that we receive from peace and justice groups in central Kentucky. The more households that participate, the more financial support the organization will receive from Kroger.

If you have not yet taken the opportunity to support CKCPJ in this way, now would be a great time to register.

Support CKCPJ by linking your Kroger Plus card to #16439 at krogercommunityrewards.com

CKCPJ Committee Reports

Housing Justice Project

The Housing Justice Project is in the process of arranging a meeting between representatives of the Lexington Fair Housing Council, Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, LFUCG's Social Service Division, Community Action Council, and the Lexington Housing Authority to talk about ways to minimize the number of people who lose Section 8 eligibility or are evicted from public housing.

Committee chair Rick Clewett met with Ken Armstrong, new head of the city's Code Enforcement program. He is very aware of how both real-estate developers and others try to use Code Enforcement as a weapon for their own advantage. He has started working on a proposal for licensing landlords up the chain of command in LFUCG.

A Sidewalk Assistance Program already exists to help low-income homeowners pay for repairs of broken sidewalks that violate

code. Armstrong is trying to work on a parallel Housing Assistance Program to help low-income homeowners deal with other kinds of code violations.

The committee discussed how best to work on movement building while our limited technical projects are under way and decided to explore the possibility of building a unified campaign (including both the Housing Justice Project and Working Families Campaign. This project would encompass the goals of these and the Peace Action Council in a coordinated, intentional two to five year effort to strengthen the sense of community and cooperation in the city as a basis for accomplishing more specific goals.

Reports for the Peace Action Council and Lexington Working Families Campaign will be included in the September 2016 issue of Peaceways.

Submissions to Peaceways

Articles submitted for publication in *Peaceways* should show an awareness of and sensitivity to the CKCPJ's mission and concerns. Articles submitted by non-Council members are encouraged.

We accept articles of varying lengths. News items (50-250 words) are welcome; announcements or reports of council-sponsored events (or events of council member groups) are likely to receive priority. Short essays reflecting an individual's experience of peace- and justice-related events and community action or activism are encouraged, as well.

Feature articles should be no longer than 500 words, unless you are willing to have the piece cut to fit one page of *Peaceways* text. Pieces will be edited for clarity.

Please include references in the text for all quotations, statistics, and unusual facts. End- or footnotes are not used. We encourage submissions to be queried at peacewayseditor@gmail.com before writing a feature article intended solely for *Peaceways*.

For all submissions, the author's name, address, and phone number should appear on the body of the submitted text. If you submit material that has been published or which you are also submitting to other publishers, be sure to indicate this. Also include information about your relationship to any organization or issue mentioned in the article for inclusion in a biographical reference at the end of the story. Submissions should be made in Word format *via* email. Book reviews are usually solicited by the editor but we welcome inquiries from potential reviewers.

Submission deadline is the 10th of each month. *Peaceways* is published 10 times a year.

*Comfort
the afflicted;
and afflict the
comfortable*

The Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice

Board of Directors: Rebecca Ballard DiLoreto, Karen Conley (co-chair), David Christiansen (co-chair), Bilal El-Amin, Mary Ann Ghosal (secretary), Heather Hadi, Randolph Hollingsworth, Rahul Karanth, Steven Lee Katz (treasurer), Richard Mitchell, Bruce Mundy, Steve Pavey, Nadia Rasheed, Rabbi Uri Smith, Teddi Smith-Robillard, Craig Wilkie. *Peaceways Staff:* Margaret Gabriel (editor); Penny Christian, Gail Koehler, Betsy Neale, Jim Trammel (proofreaders). The views expressed in *Peaceways* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of CKCPJ.

Member Organizations: ACLU-Central Kentucky Chapter; Ahava Center for Spiritual Living; Amnesty International, UK Chapter; Bahá'ís of Lexington; Berea Friends Meeting; Bluegrass Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program; Bluegrass United Church of Christ; Catholic Action Center; Central Christian Church; Commission for Peace and Justice, Catholic Diocese of Lexington; Gay and Lesbian Services Organization; Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky; Hunter Presbyterian Church; Islamic Society of Central Kentucky; Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass; Kentuckians for the Commonwealth; Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Central Kentucky Chapter; Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Kentucky Resources Council; Lexington Fair Housing Council; Lexington Fairness; Lexington Friends Meeting; Lexington Hispanic Association (Asociación de Hispanos Unidos); Lexington Labor Council, Jobs with Justice Committee; Lexington Living Wage Campaign; Lexington Socialist Student Union; Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church; Newman Center at UK; North East Lexington Initiative; One World Film Festival; Students for Peace and Earth Justice (Bluegrass Community and Technical College); Peacecraft; The Plantory; Progress (student group at Transylvania University); Second Presbyterian Church; Shambhala Center; Sustainable Communities Network; Union Church at Berea; Unitarian Universalist Church of Lexington; United Nations Association, Bluegrass Chapter.



Peaceways is published ten times a year by the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, 1588 Leestown Rd., Ste. 130-138, Lexington KY 40511. Deadline for calendar items for the September issue is August 10. (859) 488-1448 or email peacewayseditor@gmail.com.

Calendar for Peace & Justice

The council seeks to promote dialogue as a path to peace and justice. Consequently, we announce events that we do not necessarily endorse.

Fri., July 1

Community Action Council, Summer Soirée, part of the LexEnd Poverty Movement, 7 p.m. - midnight, 21C Museum Hotel, 167 West Main Street, Lexington. Kick off your Fourth of July weekend with a night of dancing to ENCORE of Lexington and D.J. Warren Peace. The night will include live arts, a silent auction, heavy hors d'oeuvres and an open bar until 10 p.m. Reservations at eventbrite.com/e/a-summer-soiree-part-of-the-lexendpoverty-movement-tickets-24268487700>

Mon., July 4

Safe Summer Lexington, an initiative of the CKCPJ Peace Action Council and other community leaders, seeks to promote youth safety this summer. Groups from all over Lexington will march as a unit behind the Safe Summer Lexington banner in the Fourth of July Parade, each group sharing its support for Safe Summer Lexington and ideas young people can use to promote safety with their friends and ways to look out for one another.

Thurs-Sat., July 7-10

Whippoorwill Festival, sponsored by Kentucky Heartwood, at Lago Linda Hideaways, near Beattyville. The festival will include over 75 earth-friendly workshops that seek to preserve and honor old-time and Appalachian living traditions. The festival is family-friendly and use of alcohol is discouraged. For more information and registration, visit www.whippoorwillfest.com.

Tues., July 12, Aug. 9

PFLAG, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington, 6:30-8:30 p.m. JULY MEETING: Updates on Advocacy: in the Classroom/In the Courtroom. AUGUST MEETING: Clergy Panel: Path to Becoming an LGBTQ Ally. We welcome LGBTQ persons, family members, friends and allies, wherever you are in your journey or family struggle. Our presentation and Q & A session takes place during the first hour, followed by our confidential support group meeting. More information at www.pflagcentralky.or or 859-338-4393.

Fri., July 15

Gallery Hop, GLOBAL LEX, 5 - 8 p.m., 1306 Versailles Rd. Suite 110, in partnership with the Japan America Society of Kentucky (JASK). The event will feature a speaker at 5:30pm and a light reception, and is free and open to the public. The exhibit will be on display in the GLOBAL LEX International Art Gallery during July and August. For more information call GLOBAL LEX 859-246-4333.

Wed., July 13, Aug. 10

CKCPJ Housing Justice Project, 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Committee members will report on their ongoing efforts to gather information and support from members of LFUCG, other elected officials, non-profit groups that work in the housing sector, and other groups that work for and support fair housing.

Mon., July 18, Aug. 15

CKCPJ steering committee meeting, 7 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Discussion will include planning for the upcoming committee meetings, re-cap of the June 1 Potluck and initial planning for the September Potluck and proposals for new initiatives.

Tues., July 19, Aug. 16

Lexington Working Families Campaign. 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. The meeting will focus on the ongoing discussion of the minimum wage in Lexington, including the need for enforcement of the upcoming increase and monitoring and reporting wage theft.

Wed., July 20, Aug. 17

CKCPJ Peace Action Council, 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Discussion topics will include "Safe Summer Lexington," non-violence training, possible decorative peace plates, and other peace-related topics.

Fri.-Sun., Aug. 26-28

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Generating Change: 35 Years of Action for Justice. Annual Membership Meeting. General Butler State Park (Carroll County). For more information, including registration, kftc.org.

Wed., Sept. 14

CKCPJ, Board meeting and potluck supper, 6:30 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Agenda will include a presentation by Steve Pavey and reports from CKCPJ standing committees. Participants are encouraged to bring a dish to share. The meeting house has a microwave oven and outlets that can accommodate crock pots, but there is no stove top available. Please submit items you would like to take under discussion to David Christiansen, davidccky@gmail.com. The public is invited.

Fri-Sat., Sept. 9-11

Catholic Committee of Appalachia, Annual Gathering, Aldersgate Camp and Retreat Center near Ravenna, Ky. The gathering will feature a panel discussion of noted economist Glenmary Father John Rausch and Dr. Ron Eller, author of *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*. For information about registration see ccappal.org.

If you would like to become more involved with Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, attend a committee meeting in July or August. Any and all meetings are open and welcoming.

All meetings are held at Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Avenue, Lexington.

See you there!

Annual Meeting of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth

In the late 1970s, citizens in six Appalachian states conducted a land study, researching the ownership of land and minerals in selected counties, and who paid the taxes. The study documented what many people had suspected: The valuable coal property was owned primarily by out-of-state holding companies, and they paid almost no taxes to the host counties or their schools.

For many, it was a shock that one of the richest regions of the world in terms of natural resources was so poor in services.

The study led to calls to address the issues it raised. Citizens began meeting about the tax laws that exempted coal owners and the property laws that allowed coal companies to strip mine a landowner's surface without permission.

Through the summer and fall of 1981, 40 citizens held a series of meetings that led to the formation of the Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition. The group vowed to change state tax laws and reverse a recent law exempting coal companies from property tax on their coal holdings. More importantly, they agreed their approach to change would be direct-action organizing.

The organization, now known as Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, will hold its Annual Membership Meeting at General Butler State Park near Carrollton on Fri. Aug. 26 through Sun. Aug. 27. The event will begin with an evening of music, mingling, dancing and a trivia game that will highlight fun facts from KFTC's first 35 years.

Saturday's keynote address will be given by State Representative Attica Scott. The afternoon will include workshops that address issues of environmental, social and economic justice. Saturday night will feature an awards dinner and cultural sharing.

A business meeting will follow workshops on Sunday morning that will adjourn by noon. For more information or to register, see kftc.org, contact carissa@kftc.org, or call 502-589-3188.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

CKCPJ Steering Committee Meetings, third Monday, 7 p.m. More info: (859) 488-1448 or peaceandjusticeky@gmail.com. All are welcome!

Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Peace, every Thursday, 5:30-6 p.m. at Triangle Park (corner of Broadway and Main Street) in downtown Lexington. Contact Richard Mitchell, (859) 327-6277.

Migrant Network Coalition, first Monday, noon-1:15 p.m., GLOBAL LEX, 1306 Versailles Road, Lexington. Contact Lindsay Mattingly, lmatingly@lexpublib.org, (859) 231-5514.

PFLAG Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 6:30-8:30 p.m. LGBTQ individuals of all ages, family members, friends and allies are welcome. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington. Visit info@pflagcentralky.org or (859) 338-4393. Speakers followed by confidential support group meeting.

Bluegrass Fairness of Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Lexington Public Central Library, 140 E. Main St., Lexington. Contact Craig Cammack, chair, (859) 951-8565 or info@lexfair.org.

Wednesday Night GLSO "Heart to Heart" discussion group, 7 p.m. at the Pride Center, 389 Waller Ave., Lexington. GLSO operates Kentucky's only Pride Center, where they've been quietly providing services to the GLBTQQA community for decades. More info, hours Pride Center is open. and other links at www.glso.org.

Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky, first Thursday, 7 p.m., Great Hall of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Rd., Lexington. The Forum is a Chapter of the American Humanist Association. Meetings are open to people of all beliefs willing to express their opinions in a civil manner. Childcare is provided. Contact President Staci Maney, staci@olliegee.com or (859) 797-2662.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, third Thursday, 7 p.m., Episcopal Diocese Mission House at Fourth St. and MLK Blvd, Lexington. Contact Ondine Quinn, (859) 276-0563.

NAMI Lexington Support Groups, every Sunday, 2:30-4 p.m. Participation Station, 869 Sparta Court, Lexington. Call (859) 272-7891 or visit www.namilex.org.

Christian-Muslim Dialogue Program, fourth Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon. All are welcome. Locations vary, call (859) 277-5126. The Christian-Muslim dialogue promotes understanding and mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. By exploring moral, cultural and political factors shaping the current context, the program promotes personal and collective responsibility to build a more just and peaceful world.

Dance Jam, every Tuesday, 5:30-7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. Move to the extent you are able. Sponsored by Motion Matters, \$7 per session to cover space rental. Contact Pamela, info@motionmatters.org, (859) 351-3142.

Movies with Spirit, second Friday of every month. Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Road, Lexington. Potluck at 6 p.m., film at 7.

National Action Network, third Thursday each month, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, Lexington.

To include a regular meeting of your organization in this space, contact Margaret Gabriel, peacewayseditor@gmail.com.

Efforts to bring an end to vacant properties in Lexington

by Billie Mallory, reprinted with permission from the Lexington Herald-Leader

Vacant properties are sometimes barely noticeable, but in some Lexington neighborhoods abandoned properties have become the norm.

A surplus of vacant housing can put an undue and unfair burden on neighborhoods, with unsecured buildings covered in trash and weeds and in disrepair.

All of this invites vagrancy and increases the likelihood of criminal activity. None of this may seem relevant unless you live in a neighborhood with street after street of vacant and boarded-up houses, bordered by trash-strewn and weed-covered lots. These are devastating to a neighborhood struggling to remain viable for its lower-income and often aging and disabled residents.

Such a neighborhood lies northeast of downtown, known as the East End.

According to recent research from the Vacant Property Research Network, “residents in blighted areas are politically, economically and socially marginalized and exposed to greater than average safety and contamination issues” including lead paint, asbestos, inadequate insulation and aged-out plumbing and electrical systems. Blight also refers more broadly to litter/trash, vacant/overgrown lots, inadequate street lighting and lack of sidewalks and

other basic services and amenities.

The Keep America Beautiful organization has also found that blighted properties “cost city government \$5,000 to \$35,000 per property and that vacant properties have higher risks of fires, vandalism and other criminal behaviors; also residents in such neighborhoods have greater exposure to public health and environmental risks.” The East End has always had a diversity of race, culture, age and income. It was

These organizations not only convert vacant houses and blighted properties into safe and decent affordable housing but also reduce gentrification while working to transform blighted neighborhoods into vibrant, desirable communities.

What's the Vacant Property Review Commission?

by Billie Mallory, MSW, East End Community Development Corporation

The Vacant Property Review Commission (VPRC) was created by city ordinance to identify vacant, blighted and deteriorated properties; to certify them as “abandoned urban property” that can be taxed at a higher rate; and to make other recommendations concerning such properties such as liens or demolition. The VPRC is served by volunteer members appointed by the Mayor and represent builders, realtors, lenders, neighborhood representatives, Council person and PVA. This Commission meets monthly to discuss abandoned property issues and to review the current list to determine their status and resulting penalties. Shevawn Akers, 2nd District Councilmember serves on the VPRC as a strong advocate voice for fair and just, responsible ownership.

To report a suspected vacant property,

go to lexingtonky.gov and search Vacant Property Review Commission to complete a report on-line. Know that abandoned and blighted properties impact us all by lowering surrounding property values, inviting criminal behavior or other unwanted activities and makes the whole neighborhood look bad. Vacant properties also create a drain on our local economy and often must be taken care of by various city divisions by being boarded up or demolished, sometimes with vagrants or arson causing destruction that could affect nearby structures as well. Unusable and undesirable properties (structures or vacant lots) are also wastelands that could otherwise provide affordable housing. Be a responsible property owner and expect the same of others around you for a fair and just community for us all.

once a thriving mix of historic estates, mid-range family residences and shotgun houses.

Following the urban flight of the '60s and '70s, many homes were abandoned. Some were converted into boarding homes or low-income rentals; the neighborhood has been in decline for nearly 50 years. It now has a disproportionate number of abandoned properties, representing nearly 24 percent of Lexington's total “certified” vacant property, with as many as 10 vacant houses or lots on one block.

Not surprisingly, the East End also has a huge number of code-enforcement violations with as many as 150 citations since the first of this year, including property and nuisance issues that paint a dismal view of this historic community.

Recent changes in the administration of city code enforcement and participation on the Vacant Property Commission have increased citations and abatement on such blighted properties and are imposing higher tax assessments on vacant and improperly maintained properties.

This will eventually help to raise the quality of housing stock and make more properties available for low-income affordable housing as well as make these neighborhoods safer and more vibrant.

This community is very fortunate to have a number of non-profit organizations with a mission to provide affordable housing in such neighborhoods, including Habitat for Humanity, the Urban League, No Li CDC, Emerge Properties and Community Ventures.

These organizations not only convert vacant houses and blighted properties into safe and decent affordable housing but also reduce gentrification while working to transform blighted neighborhoods into vibrant, desirable communities.

A number of community-based advocacy groups, such as the East End Community Development Corp., the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, the Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative as well as several neighborhood associations have been actively working to improve community life in these stressed neighborhoods.

All of us in Lexington need to join in such efforts to make our community a safe and vibrant place to live in every neighborhood.

Billie is the founder of the East End Community Development Corporation.

PEACEWAYS

The Central Kentucky Council
for Peace and Justice
1588 Leestown Rd Ste 130-138,
Lexington KY 40511

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*“If we could read the secret history of our
enemies, we would find in each man's life
sorrow and suffering enough to
disarm all hostility.”*

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Story in Milwaukee parallels Lexington

EVICTED: Poverty and Profit in the American City. By Matthew Desmond. 2016, Penguin/Random House. 405 pages.

Reviewed by Jim Trammel

Matthew Desmond's *Evicted* might become an ensemble tragedy film someday, and it would unwind so glumly it would make the 2009 movie "Precious" look like a laugh-a-minute romp.

We follow Milwaukee trailer-park dwellers as they try vainly to hang on to a simple place to stay. Desmond lived and moved with them from 2008 into 2009; all the quotes are real, all the inner thoughts verified.

Desmond's naturalist eye weaves gritty details into a fabric of hopelessness. Most live in crime, rats, stopped-up plumbing and trash, and that's tragic; but it's hardly more hopeful when one lady keeps her place neat, down to the steam-pressed curtains, because you know she will lose it, all the same.

This ruthless system charges 60 to 80 percent of monthly income for rent (when it should be more like 30); forces renters to agree to own dilapidated trailers (because owners rather than landlords pay for repairs) while paying exorbitant rents for the land beneath; and renters are further billed for storage of their belongings after the eviction.

We jump to blame the landlords, but that's too simple. Desmond follows one, Sherrena Taylor (all the names are changed), and we see she's hammered from the other side by the mortgage bankers and city officials. If she doesn't collect rents ruthlessly, she'll be short herself when the bill comes due. The trailer park owner, complicit in its dilapidation, fears the inspectors and politicians. All is in a horrible stasis.

But the central immediate tragedies are the tenants'. Decide as you read what you would do in their places.

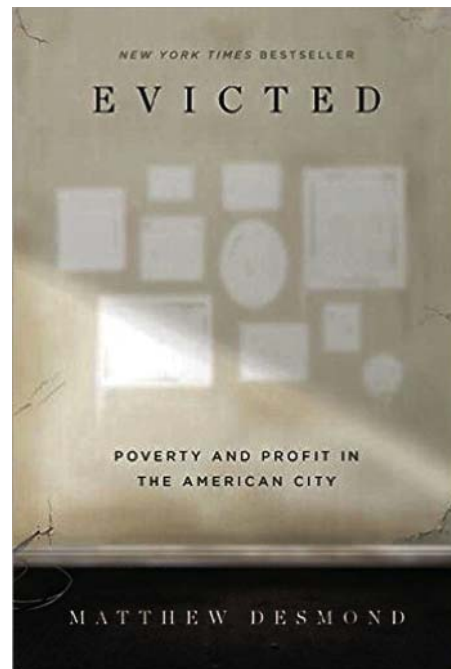
Would you pay some of what you owe your landlord, knowing it's not enough to forestall eviction, or hold your little bit of money for other things? Life is a hopeless Monopoly game when you can only afford the rent on Baltic Avenue, and face eviction and worse lodgings on Mediterranean – if the Baltic eviction doesn't disqualify you.

Grasping relatives, wheedling friends, abusive males, and helpless needy children all figure in the most hopeless situations – and hey, my fellow liberals, sometimes the renters' problems are Their Own Damn Fault. My favorite character, Crystal, blows her \$80 monthly food stamps on the temporary luxury of one lobster-tail dinner with all the trimmings, just because she craves something beyond subsistence, just for once. Though I shake my head, I also completely understand.

If the economic demons don't get you from the outside, there's always drugs, alcohol, crime, the endless string of make-do's, and the pure plain bleak depression and always-present hopelessness to break your health and spirit.

Too-high rents and stagnant incomes have combined to make the eviction trap pinch harder than ever, denying the basic need of a place to retreat to when life gets brutal. New York City in 2012 had 80 daily nonpayment evictions. One in four low-income moves in Milwaukee, from 2009 to 2011, were involuntary.

And locally it's largely the same. Rick Clewett, chair of the Housing Justice Project of CKCPJ, reported in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* that more than 10 percent of Lexington's renters received eviction notices last year (about 6,000 out of 55,000 renters). Six thousand is a respectable gate at a high school



The stark cover of *Evicted* tells an equally stark story; Framed items leave their ghosts on a cracking wall rising from the filthy floor of an apartment where tired natural lighting is the only power. There was life here — but now, it's elsewhere. If anywhere.

basketball game, or a door-buster crowd for the Lexington Legends. All these people contending with eviction, in one single year, in our own county, and the rest of us are doing nothing?

When you read, I recommend you start on page 293, with the back chapters, to learn how Desmond got these sad details before you plunge into the despair of the main book.

This task left its author depressed for years. I can promise you no different reaction to these horrors.

The evictions problem deserves our attention and a solution. It's bigger than any of us, but maybe not bigger than all of us.

•
Reviewer Jim Trammel was transported for a while from worrying about his cable bill and other first-world problems.