

# Peaceways

CENTRAL KENTUCKY COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE March 2018

## Put it on the agenda

by Margaret Gabriel, Peaceways Editor

Every month I update the box on the first page of *Peaceways* with the number of people killed or wounded through gun violence in the United States for the year to date. We began including that information in 2016 when it was suggested by David Christianson, who was the co-chair of CKCPJ at that time.

The steering committee agreed, and since that time, I have copied the box, from month to month, issue to issue. Every month, I have a moment of sadness when I increase the number over the previous year.

In October 2016, the number included Trinity Gay, a student at Lexington's Lafayette High School. In February, the number included students who died at the hands of a fellow student at Marshall County High School in Benton, Ky.

After the shooting in Florida on Valentine's Day/Ash Wednesday, I realized that the posting I update in *Peaceways* every month has been every bit as effective as the "thoughts and prayers" that have been offered by politicians who have been ineffective at passing legislation of any kind that will keep people safe from mass shootings.

Since February 2016, when *Peaceways* published statistics for the first time, the narrative that David wrote is largely unchanged. He said:

*No matter how many people are killed or maimed in America, Congress continues to do nothing about gun violence. Whether it is grade school children at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut or a Bible study group in South Carolina, a high school in Columbine, Colorado, or a holiday party in San Bernardino, California, the response from Congress is the same: NOTHING. We can't even get our elected officials to put this on the agenda for discussion. According to gunviolence.org, guns take the lives of thousands each year in America.*

David said that updated statistics about gun violence would be published in every issue of *Peaceways* and on all CKCPJ agendas. He urged readers to include the statistics on every agenda of every meeting they attend.

I have been faithful about including the statistics in every issue, but failed miserably at reminding people why they're included and asking people to include it on their own agendas.

Would that information spur folks to contact their state and federal legislators for gun control? Maybe not, but if they don't have the information easily available, I'd say definitely not.

A full two years ago, David wrote: "Public awareness (and outrage) might ultimately overwhelm the influence of those who seek to prevent meaningful discussion." At least, now there has been some discussion by lawmakers.

But even so, put it on the agenda for school meetings, church meetings, neighborhood association meetings. If your bridge club has a written agenda, put these statistics on it.

As editor of *Peaceways*, I commit to reminding you about including the statistics about gun violence on the agenda of any meeting you attend. I will ask that they be included on the agenda of the regular meetings I attend for the Youth Services Center at Lafayette High School and Mary Queen of the Holy Rosary Church.

I ask you to do the same. Add some action to your "Ts and Ps."

## A Mother's Reflection

by Penny Christian

Horrible details from the Parkland shooting [in Florida] emerge every day, and as a parent, my heart breaks. We are hearing of how the shooter lost his mom last year, that his girlfriend broke up with him. He was surrounded by guns, enraged all the time. How sad; the only logical conclusion was that he murder his classmates. Mental health issues due to childhood trauma ...

Now I speak as a parent of color. Let's say this shooting happened in Compton. A 16-year-old black boy shoots up his high school, killing multiple classmates and teachers. Why? Was he depressed? Did he lose his father at a young age to drugs or incarceration? We don't know, because no one would have bothered to speak to his friends or family and ask what could have caused this child to do

such a thing. Instead, all we would see is a grainy photo of this gang-banging thug who had no value for life, only 16 years old but still seen as a grown man. No mention of mental illness, no referring to him as a child. And don't even think there will be coverage of his arraignment, because he never got out of that building alive. Trust me, every cop on the scene emptied their weapons into that child.

So there it is. This is our truth, and until you change the narrative, don't you dare come to me about arming teachers. It'll be hunting season before you know it.

*Penny is a member of CKCPJ's Peaceways committee and the mother of four, including a high school music teacher. This reflection appears on her Facebook page.*

### Gun Violence In America as of 2-26-18

(excluding suicide)

2018 (year to date)

Killed 2,249  
Wounded 3,844

2017 (year to date)

Killed 1,003  
Wounded 3,849

Source: www.gunviolencearchive.org

# Fresh Stop Markets give access

by April Taylor

Fresh Stop Markets, located in several areas across the country, ignite community power and enable people to obtain fresh food by joining local farmers and community members in a cooperative economy through a grassroots organizing approach. Working from the belief that fresh food is a basic human right and that communities have the inner potential to facilitate the emergence of justice in their own lives, the TWEENS Nutrition and Fitness Coalition, in conjunction with New Roots, Inc., serves as a method of encouraging pop-up bi-weekly farm-fresh food markets in various neighborhoods to provide fresh, local produce on a sliding fee scale.

While Fresh Stop Markets may seem similar to community-supported agriculture and farmers' markets, they are radically different in their community empowerment approach. The organization and functioning of Fresh Stop Markets are led by people who are most impacted by food injustice and food apartheid. People whose lives are impacted by preventable diseases that can be improved by fresh fruits and vegetables come together to improve the quality of their own lives, the lives of their families and the lives of their community members. People whose socio-economic status means they must make tough choices about what they need and what they can get are able to build a cooperative economic system with their family, friends and community.

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## Want to Be More Involved? Work at the Polls

In this time of increasing activism, individuals often say, "I want to do more but I don't know what needs to be done." For members in that quandary, here is a thought.

The Fayette County Clerk's office welcomes potential workers to oversee the polls during elections. Interested persons must complete an application which can be obtained by calling 859-253-8352 or 859-253-8354. If accepted, candidates must complete a two-hour training on voting equipment and a 2.5-hour training on voting procedures. Training time as well as time spent working at the polls is compensated.

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*Reprinted from the newsletter of the Lexington League of Women Voters.*

The system allows them all to get the fresh food they deserve. Fresh Stop Markets give communities facing food violence the opportunity to find freedom from food and economic systems that have a negative impact on the most vulnerable among us.

One of the key ways Fresh Stop Markets begin is by bringing together interested community members in a popular democracy-style discussion to talk about the history of food in their communities, how and why food violence exists, how race, class and food intersect, and how Fresh Stop Markets create a community-driven solution to these problems.

Food justice workshops are scheduled for March 7, 6 p.m., Downtown Library, Conference Room A, and March 22nd 5 p.m., Woodhill Community Center, 422 Codell Dr. Contact information for Fresh Stop Markets can be found on Facebook: (@LexingtonFreshStopMarkets); email: freshstopmarkets@gmail.com or phone: (859)813-0062

*April is on the board of Lexington's Fresh Stop Market.*

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# BUILD

BUILD, Building a United Lexington through Direct Action, has a yearly cycle, and during late winter and early spring each year the organization is involved in two tasks after identifying problems to be addressed during the year. First, BUILD members begin research to better understand the problems and then identify workable, proven solutions to the problems that have been selected to address. BUILD also continues to enlarge the justice network in Lexington.

There will be a rally of that network at Shiloh Baptist Church, 237 E. Fifth St., Lexington, at 7 p.m. on April 16. The rally will give updates concerning research into crime, mental health and drugs in Lexington. BUILD members will give information that has been gained following research and how city officials will be asked to address the problems.

BUILD has a goal of attendance of 2,000 people at its Nehemiah Action on Thurs., May 10 at Heritage Hall.

If you are interested in participating in the Nehemiah Action, please call 859-608-2946 or (859) 327-6277.

## The Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice

*Board of Directors:* Rebecca Ballard DiLoreto, Rick Clewett, 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 10 times a year by the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, 1588 Leestown Rd., Ste. 130-138, Lexington KY 40511. The next issue of *Peaceways* will appear in April. Deadline for calendar items is March 10. Contact (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.*

**Tues., March 6**

**CKCPJ Peace Action committee**, 7 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Ongoing discussion of schools, non-violence training, summer youth jobs, and work with Congolese community.

**Wed., March 7**

**Fresh Stop Markets**, Food justice workshop 7 Lexington Public Library, 140 E. Main St. For more information, call 859-813-0062

**Tues.-Sun. Mar. 6-11**

**Catholic Committee of Appalachia** Cherokee Spirituality Retreat, Cherokee North Carolina. Participants will experience the spirituality of the Cherokee people with Native American presenters. Through legends, ceremonies, history, culture and food, the depth of Cherokee spirituality offers a background for participants to reflect on their own journey. Partial scholarships available. For more information, contact Mary Herr, (828) 497-9498, maryherr@dnet.

**Thurs., March 8**

**Lexington Advocacy Team** 6 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Lobbying efforts to prevent war (especially nuclear) with North Korea.

**Fri., March 9**

**Catholic Committee of Appalachia** 10 a.m. KDFWR-Rockcastle Wildlife Management Area, Pulaski County. Planting American chestnut trees by Marian University volunteers from Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Campton, Ky. Everyone is welcome. Contact Sister Susan Marie Pleiss, (606) 668-3731, for information and directions to the planting site.

**Thurs., March 8**

**One World Film Festival**, 7 p.m., Kentucky Theatre, 214 East Main Street, Lexington. *The Women's Balcony*. good-hearted comedy of an accident during a bar mitzvah that leads to a rift between the men and women in a devout community in Jerusalem. The film is a portrait of a modern community struggling to balance protocol with practical, progressive values.

**Sat., March 10**

**One World Film Festival**, 7 p.m., Kentucky Theatre, 214 East Main Street, Lexington. *If You're Not in the Obit, Eat Breakfast*. Carl Reiner and his friends talk about a longer life span. The film shows there is still plenty of life left in "the older population."

**Tues., March 13**

**CKCPJ single-payer health care committee**, 7 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Discussion will include promotion of the single-payer health care concept, how it will benefit citizens and how it can be promoted to lawmakers.

**Tues., March 13**

**PFLAG Central Kentucky**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington. Learn about HIV risk reduction and treatments. Also learn about free HIV testing. The meeting will be followed by a confidential support group meeting. Visit [info@pflagcentralky.org](mailto:info@pflagcentralky.org) or call (859) 338-4393.

**Thurs., March 22**

**Fresh Stop Markets**, Food justice workshop, 5 p.m. Woodhill Community Center, 422 Codell Drive. For more information, call 859-813-0062.

**Fri.-Sat. Mar. 23-24**

**Catholic Committee of Appalachia** State of Appalachian Conference 2018. 1 p.m., Pipestem Resort State Park, Pipestem, West Virginia. The event will bring together faith voices in Appalachia to problem-solve by focusing on the spiritual, economic and ecological state of the region and ways to restore it. Register at [www.stateofappalachia.org](http://www.stateofappalachia.org). Scholarships are available.

**Mon., March 26**

**CKCPJ steering committee meeting**, 5:30 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Discussion will include planning for the upcoming committee meetings, proposals for new initiatives and

**Tues., April 3**

**CKCPJ Peace Action committee**, 7 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Ongoing discussion of schools, non-violence training, summer youth jobs, and work with Congolese community.

**Thurs., April 5**

**Lexington Advocacy Team** 6 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Lobbying efforts to continue to prevent war (especially nuclear) with North Korea.

**Mon., April 16**

**CKCPJ steering committee meeting**, 5:30 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave., Lexington. Discussion will include planning for the upcoming committee meetings, proposals for new initiatives and continuing action.

**Mon., April 16**

**BUILD Rally**, 7 p.m., Shiloh Baptist Church, 237 E. Fifth Street, Lexington. The action will give information about the results of the research that BUILD members have been doing concerning the 2018 issues: crime, drugs and mental health. If you are interested in attending, leave a message at (859) 608-2946.

**Thurs., May 10**

**BUILD**, Nehemiah Action, Heritage Hall, 7 p.m., 430 Vine Street, Lexington. The goal of the Nehemiah Action is to gather 2,000 people from throughout Lexington to ask Lexington city leaders to take specific actions to resolve issues of concern in Lexington. If you are interested in attending, leave a message at (859) 608-2946.

*Afflict the comfortable;  
give comfort to the afflicted.*

**Support CKCPJ  
by linking your  
Kroger Plus card  
to #16439 at  
[krogercommunityrewards.com](http://krogercommunityrewards.com)**

# Submissions to *Peaceways*

Articles submitted for publication in *Peaceways* should show an awareness of and sensitivity to the CKCPJ's mission and concerns.

Articles of varying lengths are encouraged. 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. Please query submissions to [peacewayseditor@gmail.com](mailto: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 monthly except January.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

**CKCPJ Steering Committee Meetings**, third Tuesday, 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. More info: (859) 488-1448 or [peaceandjusticeky@gmail.com](mailto: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, [lmattngly@lexpublib.org](mailto:lmattngly@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](http://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](mailto:info@lexfair.org).

**Wednesday Night GLSO "Heart to Heart" discussion group**, 7 p.m., Pride Center, 389 Waller Ave., Lexington. GLSO operates Kentucky's only Pride Center, where they have quietly provided services to the GLBTQQIA community for decades. More info, Pride Center hours. and other links at [www.glsso.org](http://www.glsso.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. Child care is provided. Contact President Staci Maney, [staci@olliegee.com](mailto: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 Beth Howard, (859) 276-0563.

**NAMI Lexington Support Groups**, every Sunday, 2:30 - 4 p.m. Participation Station, 869 Sparta Ct., Lexington. Call (859) 272-7891 or visit [www.namilex.org](http://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](mailto: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.

**Showing Up for Racial Justice**, second Tuesday of the month, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Wild Fig Coffee and Books, 726 N. Limestone, Lexington.

To include a regular meeting of your organization in this space, contact Margaret Gabriel, [peacewayseditor@gmail.com](mailto:peacewayseditor@gmail.com).

# So You Want To Talk About Race

By Ijeoma Oluo

by Seal Press: Hachette Books

Reviewed by Jim Trammel

I've never been so hopeful about learning something from a book, and then felt so let down afterward. Having read Ijeoma Oluo's cautionary lectures, the last thing I want to do now is open my insensitive white male face to talk to anyone else about race issues.

I thought I was a tolerant, progressive supporter of the struggle, or at least not an active oppressor. My friends are not all on my side of the grocery-bag test. But no. As Oluo says, putting me firmly in my place:

"If you are white in a white supremacist society, you are racist. If you are male in a patriarchy, you are sexist. If you are able-bodied, you are ableist. If you are anything above poverty in a capitalist society, you are classist. You can sometimes be all of these things at once."

Excuse me, lady, I have an appointment across town.

Whether more true or less, this is not a premise from which constructive discussion begins.

I have black friends who tell me that a white person can never be a true ally in the fight against racism, especially as long as the white person benefits from the power structure that rewards him or her. To which I (mentally) reply: Whether I can be a true valid ally or not, you're going to need my vote and support somewhere down the line for meaningful change in that power structure, so it's possible you should swallow your anger as I check my privilege, and we'll see if we can meet on common ground with respect, if not total understanding and empathy.

The book is worth reading and I recommend it, uncomfortable as it will make white readers feel. It educated me further about systemic racism, and how no white person can ever completely empathize with the full impact race has on the everyday lives of the oppressed.

After reading, even if you, Mr. Whitebread, can't talk about your feelings to people of color quite yet, you will at least be able to explain to your less enlightened white brothers and sisters such questions as:

- *When I follow a black shopper around in a store, why does she think it's about race? I'm on security and I follow everybody equally.* (Because even if this one time you're innocent of racist thoughts, she's been harassed fifty prior times, and she's carrying that burden.)

- *Why don't we work on the real problem, classism, rather than racism?* (Because it does no good to, for example, increase minimum wage if people of color still can't get jobs.)

- *Why is police brutality a race issue?* (Because officers often treat different neighborhoods differently. The statistics bear that out.)

- *Why can't I say the n-word if they can?* (Oh, come on now.)

The early chapters provide a useful definition of racism. "A prejudice against someone based on race, when those prejudices are reinforced by systems of power." This answers another frequent white-guy question, the one that goes, "Why isn't it racism when people of color discriminate against whites?" That doesn't constitute racism because people of color don't have the power structures of economy, education, police, the courts, capitalism, employment, and all the rest of the social matrix behind them. Really, my white brothers, we might or might not be sensitive to the struggle, but we really have no personal idea.

Space doesn't permit me here to tiptoe you through the minefields of intersectionality, micro-aggressions, white privilege, and all the other potential mis-steps you can commit while innocently and honestly trying to talk about race.

Knowledge of the potential pitfalls of discussion has cured me of ever making the attempt. I have always subscribed to James Baldwin's assessment: "I do not know many Negroes who are eager to be 'accepted' by white people, still



Ijeoma Oluo

less to be loved by them; they, the blacks, simply don't wish to be beaten over the head by the whites every instant of our brief passage on this planet."

As Baldwin, seconded here by Oluo, correctly establishes, whites are not owed explanations, education, or a relationship just because we might want a discussion. A person of color may not want to be our racial Google resource.

Anyhow, whites' time would be better spent addressing the systems that cause the racism, rooting out inequity at the societal level rather than pursuing the personal.

All my white friends should find and read this book, but few of them should then head out for what they hope to be a bracing, air-clearing conversation about racial attitudes with a person who you'd like to impress with your open mind. Your effort is appreciated, but they're probably not having it. The increase in your personal awareness and sensitivity may have to be enough.

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*Reviewer Jim Trammel, a member of the oppressing race, color, language, gender, ability, and orientation, will just quietly show himself out of the discussion group now, thanks. Does anyone want the cookies I brought?*

# PEACEWAYS



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

Issue #310 • March 2018

*“War is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong; and multiplies, instead of indemnifying losses.”*

– Thomas Jefferson

## Our work must be to prepare critical thinkers

by Peter Berres

Veterans Day, 2017. I watch as bleachers full of elementary and middle-school students eye with shy excitement the veterans sitting, facing them. I listen as eighth-graders eloquently, innocently, honor — in very personal terms — our service to America. My heart is warmed; my mind, concerned.

These children’s odes to veterans’ courage, commitment, and sacrifice, mingles with my memories of compatriots lost during, since, and because of the Vietnam war.

Young, smart voices thank veterans for protecting our national principles, rights, freedoms, and liberties, and for our most admirable commitment to protect other countries with selfless sacrifice.

These were exactly my beliefs at 13. Five years later, motivated by duty, I volunteered proudly and eagerly for the army, to ensure those values in Vietnam.

Fifty years ago this month, I deplaned into Vietnam’s diesel-saturated 106 degrees, feeling privileged to represent the highest ideals and values a nation could embrace. I had never questioned my country. My loyalty was blind, my obedience automatic, and the war’s ‘justness’ assumed.

And then—1968. The most pivotal year in American history? I think so. Undoubtedly, for our generation; certainly, for most veterans of the war. And absolutely, for myself.

Baby-boomers morphed into the “Vietnam generation” that year, upturning forever our political, social and cultural ‘worlds’ of superiority, confidence and innocence.

My faith became a casualty within months. America’s confidence in victory evaporated after TET, while the principles justifying our presence in Vietnam were exposed, tragically, as myth.

A child’s intellectual development

begins with absolutes, then gradually evolves toward holding in tension two contrasting possibilities. I leave the gymnasium wondering: When do we introduce to innocents the historical realities that counterbalance patriotic idealism and blind faith in abstract ideals?

Is it responsible to use only World War II to symbolize America’s international history, or to rationalize any foreign policy? Can patriotism be informed without the historical realities from Korea, Vietnam, Chile, Central America, Iraq and Afghanistan? At what point do we de-mythologize war and educate young minds to think critically, which is to say, truly patriotically?

When do we admit that we are capable of doing more harm than good, thereby lessening our ability to ensure national security and compromising our espoused values—the very values we fight for, the ones these kids believe in?

On a national level, faith in abstract ideals—unchanged by half a century of experience—is a challenge. “A man who views the world the same way at 50, as he did at 20, has wasted 30 years of his life,” is Muhammad Ali’s poignant reminder of our need to learn from experience.

We’ve essentially wasted these 50 years.

The anniversary of my arrival in Vietnam offers the opportunity and the responsibility to review the failures of our war in Vietnam—from the unjust cause for the war, to wanton ecological destruction, excessive damage to combatants and civilians, inadequate psychological/spiritual/emotional preparation for our armed forces, and the denial of responsibility for long-term damage to veterans in terms of wounds both visible and invisible.

The five decades between 1968 and 2018 ask on this anniversary for a

thorough review to link, explicitly and honestly, the past and the present, for sake of the future. No longer can we default to nostalgia, merely sharing stories or private memories; no longer can we settle into old arguments and laying blame. This focus on the particulars of Vietnam has kept us from progress.

Now is the time to use Vietnam as a reference point, to examine principles and universal truths about war in general. We have now the choice and the chance to learn from mistakes, to dedicate ourselves as a nation to the discernment of true justification for war and the limits of military solutions, to be mindful of ecological sanctity, to treat opponents and civilians humanely, to prepare soldiers adequately, and to honor our veterans on their return with support for wounds, both physical and psychological.

At the reception, my sixth-grade granddaughter enjoys cookies and punch as I enjoy her mature inquisitiveness about my service. Unpredictably, after thoughtful pause, she asks, “Grandpa, did you kill anyone?” I smile. “That’s a really important and complicated question; we’ll talk about ‘killing-in-war’ when you’re in high school.”

Fifty years out, our work is to prepare critical thinking citizens who can counter the perspective of blind faith in abstract ideals with intelligent inquiry; to cultivate a foreign policy aligned with the values and principles these eighth graders celebrate, the principles which lifted me up when I was their age, the ones the next generations deserve. We would be negligent not to.

*Peter is a new member of the CKCPJ steering committee. This reflection originally appeared in the Lexington Herald-Leader.*