



Ecumenical Peace Institute
The Northern California Chapter of
Clergy & Laity Concerned (EPI/CALC)
P.O. Box 9334 • Berkeley, CA 94709
<http://www.epicalc.org/>, epicalc@gmail.com (510) 990-0374

Planted by the Waters

Winter, 2024

CONTENTS

[Christ Under the Rubble Sermon: Rev. Munther Isaac
December, 2023](#)

[Freedom For Western Sahara, MeToo, Nonviolence....](#)

[Background On Western Sahara](#)

[Janet Gibson, ¡Presente!](#)

[Louis Vitale, ¡Presente!](#)

[Donations, Volunteerism And More....](#)



Amy Goodman with Rev. Munther Issac from Democracy Now

Christ Under the Rubble

Rev. Munther Isaac's Sermon from December 23, 2023: (transcript of sermon reprinted from Democracy Now. *Reverend Munther Isaac is a Palestinian Christian theologian and the Senior Pastor at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem*

https://www.democracynow.org/2023/12/26/christ_in_the_rubble_christmas_sermon

We are angry. We are broken. This should have been a time of joy; instead, we are mourning. We are fearful.

More than 20,000 killed. Thousands are still under the rubble. Close to 9,000 children killed in the most brutal ways, day after day. One-point-nine million displaced. Hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed. Gaza as we know it no longer exists. This is an annihilation. This is a genocide.

The world is watching. Churches are watching. The people of Gaza are sending live images of their own execution. Maybe the world cares. But it goes on.

We are asking here: Could this be our fate in Bethlehem? In Ramallah? In Jenin? Is this our destiny, too?

We are tormented by the silence of the world. Leaders of the so-called free lined up one after the other to give the green light for this genocide against a captive population. They gave the cover. Not only did they make sure to pay the bill in advance, they veiled the truth and context, providing the political cover. And yet another layer has been added: the theological cover, with the Western church stepping into the spotlight.

Our dear friends in South Africa taught us the concept of the “state theology,” defined as “the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism.” It does so by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes.

Here in Palestine, the Bible is weaponized against us — our very own sacred text. In our terminology in Palestine, we speak of the empire. Here we confront the theology of the empire, a disguise for superiority, supremacy, chosenness and entitlement. It is sometimes given a nice cover, using words like “mission” and “evangelism,” “fulfillment of prophecy,” and “spreading freedom and liberty.”

The theology of the empire becomes a powerful tool to mask oppression under the cloak of divine sanction. It speaks of land without people. It divides people into “us” and “them.” It dehumanizes and demonizes. The concept of land without people, again, even though they knew too well that the land had people — and not just any people, a very special people. Theology of the empire calls for emptying Gaza, just like it called for the ethnic cleansing in 1948, a “miracle,” or “a divine miracle,” as they called it. It calls for us Palestinians now to go to Egypt, maybe Jordan. Why not just the sea?

I think of the words of the disciples to Jesus when he was about to enter Samaria: “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” they said of the Samaritans. This is the theology of the empire.

This is what they're saying about us today.

This war has confirmed to us that the world does not see us as equal. Maybe it's the color of our skins. Maybe it is because we are on the wrong side of a political equation.

Even our kinship in Christ did not shield us. So they say if it takes killing 100 Palestinians to get a single " Hamas militant," then so be it. We are not humans in their eyes. But in God's eyes, no one can tell us that.

The hypocrisy and racism of the Western world is transparent and appalling. They always take the word of Palestinians with suspicion and qualification. No, we're not treated equally. Yet, on the other side, despite a clear track record of misinformation, lies, their words are almost always deemed infallible.

To our European friends: I never ever want to hear you lecture us on human rights or international law again. And I mean this. We are not white, I guess. It does not apply to us, according to your own logic.

In this war, the many Christians in the Western world made sure the empire has the theology needed. It is thus self- defense, we were told. And I continue to ask: How is the killing of 9,000 children self-defense? How is the displacement of 1.9 million Palestinians self-defense?

In the shadow of the empire, they turned the colonizer into the victim, and the colonized into the aggressor. Have we forgotten — have we forgotten that the state they talk to, that that state was built on the ruins of the towns and villages of those very same Gazans? Have they forgot that?

We are outraged by the complicity of the church. Let it be clear, friends: Silence is complicity. And empty calls for peace without a ceasefire and end to occupation, and the shallow words of empathy without direct action, all under the banner of complicity.

So here is my message: Gaza today has become the moral compass of the world. Gaza was hell before October 7th, and the world was silent. Should we be surprised at their silence now?

If you are not appalled by what is happening in Gaza, if you are not shaken to your core, there is something wrong with your humanity. And if we, as Christians, are not outraged by the genocide, by the weaponization of the Bible to justify it, there is something wrong with our Christian witness, and we are compromising the credibility of our gospel message.

If you fail to call this a genocide, it is on you. It is a sin and a darkness you willingly embrace. Some have not even called for a ceasefire. I'm talking about churches. I feel sorry for you.

We will be OK. Despite the immense blow we have endured, we, the Palestinians, will recover. We will rise. We will stand up again from the midst of destruction, as we have always done as Palestinians, although this is by far maybe the biggest blow we have received in a long time. But we will be OK.

But for those who are complicit, I feel sorry for you. Will you ever recover from this? Your charity and your words of shock after the genocide won't make a difference. And I know these words of shocks are coming. And I know people will give generously for charity. But your words won't make a difference. Words of regret won't suffice for you. And let me say it: We will not accept your apology after the genocide.

What has been done has been done. I want you to look at the mirror and ask, "Where was I when Gaza was going through a genocide?" ...

In these last two months, the psalms of lament have become a precious companion to us. We cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Gaza? Why do you hide your face from Gaza?"

In our pain, anguish and lament, we have searched for God and found him under the rubble in Gaza. Jesus himself became the victim of the very same violence of the empire when he was in our land. He was tortured, crucified.

He bled out as others watched. He was killed and cried out in pain, "My God, where are you?"

In Gaza today, God is under the rubble.

And in this Christmas season, as we search for Jesus, he is not to be found on the side of Rome, but our side of the wall. He's in a cave, with a simple family, an occupied family. He's vulnerable, barely and miraculously surviving a massacre himself. He's among the refugees, among a refugee family.

This is where Jesus is to be found today.

If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza. When we glorify pride and richness, Jesus is under the rubble. When we rely on power, might and weapons, Jesus is under the rubble. When we justify, rationalize and theologize the bombing of children, Jesus is under the rubble.

Jesus is under the rubble. This is his manger. He is at home with the marginalized, the suffering, the oppressed and the displaced. This is his manger.

And I have been looking and contemplating on this iconic image. God with us precisely in this way, this is the incarnation — messy, bloody, poverty. This is the incarnation.

And this child is our hope and inspiration. We look and see him in every child killed and pulled from under the rubble.

While the world continues to reject the children of Gaza, Jesus says, "Just as you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." "You did it to me." Jesus not only calls them his own, he is them. He is the children of Gaza.

We look at the holy family and see them in every family displaced and wandering, now homeless in despair. While the world discusses the fate of the people of Gaza as if they are unwanted boxes in a garage, God in the

Christmas narrative shares their fate. He walks with them and calls them his own.

So this manger is about resilience. It's about sumud. And the resilience of Jesus is in his meekness, is in his weakness, is in his vulnerability. The majesty of the incarnation lies in its solidarity with the marginalized. Resilience because this is the very same child who rose up from the midst of pain, destruction, darkness and death to challenge empires, to speak truth to power and deliver an everlasting victory over death and darkness. This very same child accomplished this.

This is Christmas today in Palestine, and this is the Christmas message. Christmas is not about Santas. It's not about trees and gifts and lights. My goodness, how we have twisted the meaning of Christmas. How we have commercialized Christmas. I was, by the way, in the U.S.A. last month, the first Monday after Thanksgiving, and I was amazed by the amount of Christmas decorations and lights and all the commercial goods. And I couldn't help but think: They send us bombs, while celebrating Christmas in their lands. They sing about the prince of peace in their land, while playing the drum of war in our land.

Christmas in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is this manger. This is our message to the world today. It is a gospel message. It is a true and authentic Christmas message about the God who did not stay silent but said his word, and his word was Jesus. Born among the occupied and marginalized, he is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness.

This message is our message to the world today, and it is simply this: ***This genocide must stop now.***



Crèche, December 2023, Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church, Bethlehem. Photo: Munther Isaac.

Nativity scene places baby Jesus in rubble "This is what Christmas looks like in Palestine." A church in the occupied West Bank has changed this year's nativity scene, laying baby Jesus in the rubble, to show solidarity with the people of Gaza.

Freedom For Western Sahara, MeToo, Nonviolence....



Waari Khaya protesting nonviolently from rooftop

At our fall gathering 2023, *What do you know about Western Sahara?* **Sultana Khaya & Salka Barca: Nonviolently Resisting Rape and Genocide**, the Ecumenical Peace Institute (EPI) featured two speakers whose bios are just below here. After that is a transcript of a talk that Salka Barca gave before this event to the EPI Board members while planning for this event. The situation in Western Sahara has been covered in *Democracy Now* in recent years. The themes of nonviolent resistance, Me Too and freedom from occupation are themes that the EPI board felt it needed to support as we continue to be inspired by the activists of those working to free Western Sahara from occupation by Morocco.

Salka Barca is a Sahrawi-American nonviolent activist from Western Sahara who grew up in a refugee camp in Algeria and obtained her education in Libya, Algeria, and the United States. Ms. Barca is a linguist and a legal/medical interpreter/translator. She advocates nationally for the prevention of violence against women and human trafficking. She is co-founder of Karana Sahara, an NGO advocating human rights and self-determination for Western Sahara. After 43 years in exile, Salka returned to her birthplace in 2018 and again in 2022 and witnessed Moroccan brutality against the Sahrawi people.

Sultana Khaya is a human rights defender demanding independence for the Sahrawi people in Western Sahara in northwestern Africa. She advocates for the end of sexual violence against Sahrawi women. She is president of the Sahrawi

League for the Defense of Human Rights and the Protection of Western Sahara's Natural Resources in occupied Boujdour, Western Sahara, and a member of the Saharawi Commission against the Moroccan occupation (ISACOM). Khaya was nominated for the Sakharov Prize, winner of the Esther Garcia Award, and awarded the Individual War Abolisher Award of 2023 from World Beyond War. As a committed and courageous nonviolent activist, she has been targeted by Morocco. She has been abducted, beaten, and tortured. She has become a symbol of courage and a source of inspiration for Sahrawi independence.

Salka Barca: First of all, I thank you very much on behalf of Saharan Women and Saharan people, for opening this platform. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I want to emphasize that though we speak about Western Sahara as a Muslim, Arab and African nation and a developed country, we want to change the stereotype about women and the stigma against Muslim people.

We fought. And we are fighting injustice with all means necessary nonviolently. Sultana, for me, she changed some of my methods. I used to be very angry, but it affected my performance of fighting for justice right here in the United States. She was the first woman in the history of Muslim Arab women perhaps to publicly say, "I was raped; I was tortured with my sister and my family in front of my ailing mother."

Her statement in a conservative society gave me a push to work and absolutely to give it everything I have: to fight for people like Sultana, people in Western Sahara who are under occupation that nobody knows about. She has used a beautiful method of protesting the occupation when she was arbitrarily confined to her home with her sister and her 84 year old mother. They were absolutely not allowed to meet or to do anything outside of their home where they were imprisoned for almost 500 days. This is where our work for nonviolence for the first time took place in Western Sahara.

There was a successful intervention from human rights activists, from people who would give everything for peace, for justice. Sultana and many others, instead of being confined and completely silenced, went to their

roof and created a rooftop resistance. They protested from the top of their roofs and it became almost unheard of to have someone who is in a lot of pain, physically and mentally, yet have the will to continue. She defeated the Moroccan occupation with the most beautiful way of resisting that refused to go to violence.

I told her before, publicly that if I was going to go through all this violence to my mother in front of me, I don't think I could do it. I could not make it. I would go crazy. But the power she has, it's actually given me a lot of positive energy; a lot of hope, a lot of strength to continue even here in the United States. She has opened the door to so many others.

For Saharan women to have declared and start saying "We were raped," to me it's almost the MeToo movement. But in Western Sahara in a conservative society, to be a victim, one cannot speak up. I have learned by living in the United States, this country that I care for, how domestic violence, how a rape victim, can feel oppressed and speak up. Even in a society like America people are often blind. In this case, Sultana broke free from the blame of a conservative society and said "I was raped but I'm defending my country, defending my human rights, defending my existence to be free in my own country, the last colony in Africa, the Western Sahara."

The other thing is I want to emphasize on this painful point that there is a war in Western Sahara. There is a war that victimizes the Saharan civilians yet the only thing we hear on the news or so it seems is the Ukraine war. It feels like we don't exist or we don't matter. The one thing that we really hope for is solidarity, the support of organizations with people like you to stand by us for support against the media blockade on the Western Sahara issue. The Sahara Woman, have been exposed to rape, sexual torture and beatings but no one is hearing about it. It's a very, very dire situation, about this message from the Sahara woman, from the Saharan people under the occupation because we are suffering. We are extremely affected by all this and want the world to hear us and offer their support.



Salka Barca



Sultana Khaya “blowing the whistle” in MeToo cry for help

Background On Western Sahara

Excerpt from meeting with Wynd Kaufmyn about Western Sahara in August, 2023 with the EPI Board of Directors

Related article:

<https://thepanafrikanist.com/us-human-rights-delegation-detained-in-western-sahara/>. For more information go to <https://karamasahara.org/>

Wynd Kaufmyn: Let me tell you briefly about my involvement in Western Sahara. Maybe almost 2 years ago I was preparing for retirement and I told my affinity group that I was in a transition period and waiting to see what God would bring next. And Lorin Peters said, “What about Western Sahara?”

And I was like, well, what about it? He invited me to participate in a small group of people that were working on a project. Michael Beer of Nonviolence International had received a letter from a prominent activist who had been in prison in her own house for over a year. And she asked for help. So he convened a team which included people like Jack Healey from Human Rights Action Center and I was invited to join as well. The team worked to get 4 unarmed civilian protectors into the house. And we succeeded, which was, I have to say, quite a feat because there had been a lot of other groups that had tried and failed.

EPI: Tell us more about the situation in Western Sahara.

Wynd: Western Sahara is occupied by Morocco. It's been a brutal occupation that is somewhat similar to Israel's occupation of Palestine and also very different. They imprisoned a woman in her own house. They would come in periodically to rape her and her sister in front of their mother. We got 4 activists into the house which created space for them to have visitors and to get the Moroccan agents to pull back a couple of blocks.

Our volunteers were there for about 3 months. I tried to go with Lacksana, Lorin's wife, and Adrienne Kinne, former president of Veterans for Peace, to relieve the volunteers that were in the house, because they needed to get back to their lives. However we didn't make it. When we landed in El Ayoune, we were physically forced back on a plane to Casablanca by unidentified Moroccan agents. Since then, I've continued working with Sahawari people in Washington, DC, to give exposure to the issue to liberate Western Sahara.

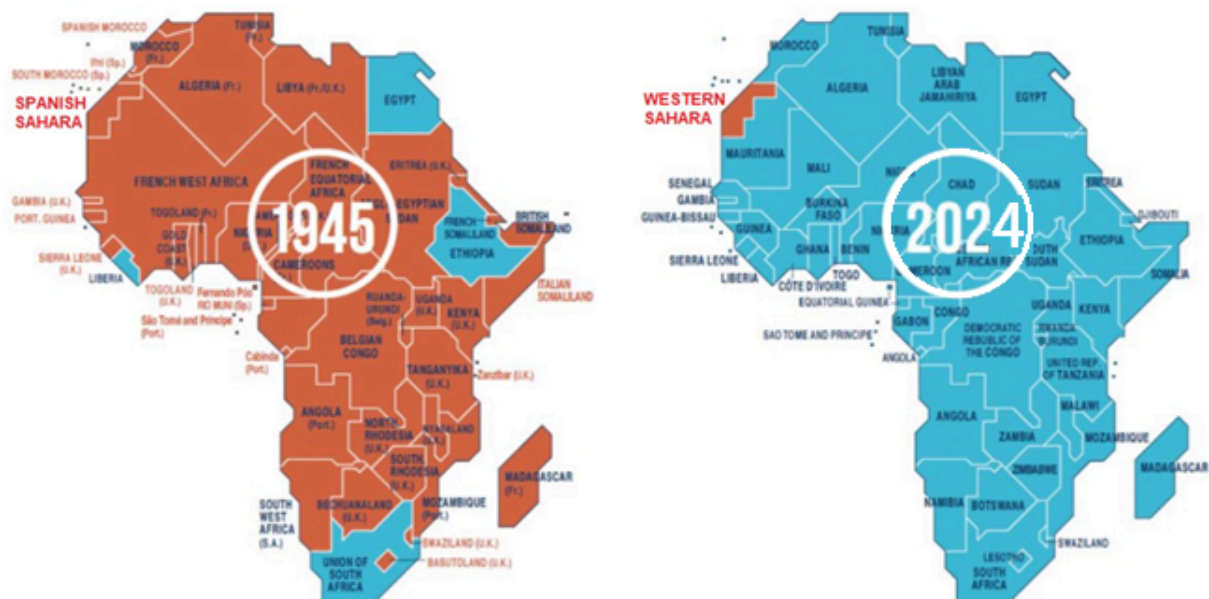
EPI: Amy Goodman had a segment on that on Democracy Now a while back.

Wynd: Yes. She interviewed one of our volunteers while she was in the house of Sultana Khaya, the woman whose house was being surrounded. She's an amazing activist who has won several awards. In fact, she's just found out she's going to be the recipient of an award from World Beyond

War (Note, World Beyond War gave the Individual War Abolisher Award of 2023 to Sultana Kaya.)

EPI: So what is the relationship between the US and, and, Morocco?

Wynd: Ever since 1975, when Spain relinquished colonial power, there's been a lot of interference from the United States to keep Western Sahara under Moroccan control. And, we could go into that history but the most recent of egregious actions of the US was in December 2020. Right before Donald Trump left office, he recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. This was a departure, a major departure, from every single nation on earth. Until then, the consensus was that Western Sahara was the last colony in Africa and it needed to become independent as all the other colonies had.



Donald Trump totally reversed that thinking and since then there have been other countries that have followed him and recognized the sovereignty of Morocco over Western Sahara. Biden was expected to walk it back when he became president, but he didn't. He was basically silent on the issue lending implicit support for what Trump did.

EPI: So what resources does Western Sahara have that the US is interested in?

Wynd: Phosphorus and fish. Western Sahara is one of the richest fishing locations in the world. And it also supplies 80% of the world's phosphates. If we don't have phosphates, we all die. It's very important for agriculture because it is used in fertilizer.

Wynd: Western Sahara is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east side, Mauritania on the south and west side and Morocco to the north. On the northeast it shares a little bit of border with Algeria.

From Wikipedia about Western Sahara: "Occupied by Spain until 1975, Western Sahara has been on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories since 1963 after a Moroccan demand. It is the most populous territory on that list, and by far the largest in area. In 1965, the United Nations General Assembly adopted its first resolution on Western Sahara, asking Spain to decolonize the territory.[7] One year later, a new resolution was passed by the General Assembly requesting that a referendum be held by Spain on self-determination. In 1975, Spain relinquished administrative control of the territory to a joint administration by Morocco, which had formally claimed the territory since 1957, and Mauritania. A war erupted between those countries and a Sahrawi nationalist movement, the Polisario Front, which proclaimed itself the rightful leadership of the SADR with a government in exile in Tindouf, Algeria. Mauritania withdrew its claims in 1979, and Morocco eventually secured de facto control of most of the territory, including all major cities and most natural resources. The United Nations considers the Polisario Front to be the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people, and maintains that the Sahrawis have a right to self-determination. Western Sahara is the last African colonial state yet to achieve its independence and has been dubbed Africa's last colony."

[For more information on the history, see Steven Zunes article.](#)

Wynd: There's something called the "Berm" which is a wall that Morocco erected. It basically bifurcates the occupied part of Western Sahara from the eastern part, which is controlled by the Polisario. There's hardly any population in that eastern part. It's a very harsh area. There's no way to cross between the eastern part of Western Sahara and the coastal western part because the Berm consists of fences, barbed wire, landmines, and other infrastructure. There are more landmines there than anywhere else in the world. Also the "berm" is the longest wall in the world after the Great Wall of China. It runs north and south.

EPI: What kind of government does Morocco have?

Wynd: Morocco is a monarchy.

EPI: Are they doing this just for the resources or is there motivation?

Wynd: Yes. Well, it's resources and land. There may also be untapped gas or oil reserves. Both the fish and the phosphates. In fact, the longest conveyor belt in the entire world is the conveyor belt that takes phosphorus from Western Sahara to the coast. That would be a tourist attraction we're trying to get people interested in it.

EPI: So what should we be asking supporters to do?

Wynd: To make this an issue on the radar of their congressional representative. Tell them that the US must back off from Trump's declaration of acknowledging or recognizing Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. Instead, the US should recognize the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as the legitimate government of Western Sahara.

Wynd: They mostly operate from the refugee camps in Algeria. Most of the people live in the refugee camps in Algeria, the other half live in the western occupied part.

EPI: Do you think that Morocco would fight for Western Sahara?

Wynd: They already have. I mean, yeah, they're fighting the Polisario which is the armed part of the SADR. The SADR is the legitimate representative of the people. There was warfare from 1975 to 1991 at which point there was a ceasefire. That ceasefire was broken in 2021. And ever since the Polisario has been fighting Morocco in the eastern part of Western Sahara.

EPI: So why hasn't, why hasn't our government stepped in?

Wynd: Our government has stepped in. But in destructive ways. Because of the geopolitical alliances, Morocco and Israel are becoming very close.

Morocco signed the Abraham Accords which included the agreement that Morocco would normalize its relationship with Israel in exchange for Trump recognizing Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

EPI: So, to please, Israel. It was to please Israel.

Wynd: Yes, and to further our own foreign policy interests.

EPI: Agriculturally speaking, who are the customers for those phosphates?

Wynd: Oh, the whole world! The whole world! In New Zealand actually there's been a movement to boycott the phosphates from Morocco, similar to the boycott of goods from stolen land in Israel, the BDS movement.

EPI: Is this for grains or for vegetables?

EPI: The United States also produces some phosphorous

Wynd: That could be; I believe the majority of the phosphates from Western Sahara is used for agriculture.

EPI: But you could buy them from Western Sahara. You wouldn't have to buy them from Morocco if they had their sovereignty, right?

Wynd: Exactly, exactly. Right, Morocco's making a ton of money off the phosphates and the fish. It has the richest fishing area in the entire world.

EPI: And so this was during the Trump administration that....

Wynd: He did it on his way out. As one of his last gestures, he recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. And that was a first. No nation in the world at that point recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

EPI: You know, white phosphorus is used for making bombs; and that extremely nasty stuff.



[Remembering with fondness Janet Gibson, who was EPI's Board president for many years. This picture above is from a youtube video, starting just after 4 minutes in when she gave the welcome on Zoom for the Good Friday vigil on April 2nd, 2021](#)

Janet Gibson, *¡Presente!*

Janet Gibson, our cherished mom, sister, aunt, grandma, friend, and champion, passed away on October 31, 2023. Janet was born in 1937 and grew up with her parents and older brother, Charles, in San Mateo, CA.

One of her first jobs after high school was working as a waitress at the Pancake House restaurant where she learned to drink coffee black and to make her famous pancakes. After graduating from College of the Pacific, she attended seminary at Boston University where she met her husband, Ed Gibson. They married in 1962.

As seminary students, Janet and Ed were profoundly influenced by the teachings of theologian Howard Thurman, who was their professor and mentor at BU. One famous quote by Howard Thurman reads, "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Certainly Janet lived her life by this credo as she dedicated herself passionately to that which made her "come alive" such as meeting new people, traveling to

new places, joyful celebrations with family and friends, social justice, immigrant rights, nuclear disarmament, world peace and especially peace in the Middle East.

As a young couple, Janet and Ed lived in Knoxville Tennessee where they attended nonviolent social protests against segregation. Afterwards, they lived in Stuttgart, Germany and traveled around the world on their way home to California, visiting dazzling places including Jordan, Egypt, India, and Indonesia. Upon returning to the United States, they lived in Oakland, CA and attended many peace rallies to stop the Vietnam War. Throughout her life, Janet attended various marches and rallies for peace, justice, and worker rights. Most recently she attended the Climate March in Washington DC on her 80th birthday.

In 1972 Janet and Ed moved to Alameda, CA, where Janet held a job as a special education teacher. They raised their two daughters, Sylvia and Jennifer, and a few dogs and cats, in a house furnished with love.

Janet worked for Alameda Unified School District for nearly three decades and, after retirement, she served two terms on the Alameda School Board. She was an active union member, valued colleague, supportive mentor, and stalwart advocate for special education students and their families. Janet also served several years as president of the Ecumenical Peace Institute board, dedicated to “embracing all faith and earth-based traditions bringing to life universal values as we seek truth, work for justice, nurture compassion and courage, reach out to each other and to our larger communities of faith and tradition, bridge the divisions that wound the human family, transform ourselves and our world through dedication to non- violence in education, advocacy, witness and action.” Additionally, Janet was involved in Alameda city politics and a member of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society. She attended the First Congregational Church of Alameda for 40 years and loved the pride flag.

In her moments at home, with family and friends, Janet was known for her amazing pies, her voluminous stories, and her astute advice. She attentively supported her beloved husband Ed during his 20 year battle with Parkinson's disease. She encouraged and inspired her children and grandchildren to live healthy, enjoyable lives dedicated to the well-being of our community and world. She and her family spent summers on a quiet lake near Inlet, NY where she will be dearly missed by her family and community.

Janet is deeply missed, yet remains a shining light in the hearts of her brother Charles and Stella Cordes, her daughters Sylvia Gibson and Jennifer Gibson, her grandchildren Ben Pineda Gibson, Soul Rees, and Eden Rees, as well as her big circle of family, especially Raymond Manna who was "like a son" to her, the whole Biehn family, and her wide sphere of friends and community. We celebrate Janet's life as a life well lived!

A celebration of Janet's life will be held on Saturday June 15, 11am-2pm at the First Congregational Church in Alameda, CA. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in Janet's honor to the Middle East Children's Alliance, www.mecaforpeace.org



Remembering Louis Vitale, who was an EPI Advisory Board member for many years, here demonstrating against weaponized drones just before being arrested at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada c. 2010 to 2012

Louis Vitale, *¡Presente!*

Louis Vitale, OFM, passed away on September 6, 2023 at age 91. He was an American Franciscan friar, peace activist, and co-founder of Nevada Desert Experience. His religious beliefs led him to participate in civil disobedience actions at peace demonstrations and acts of religious witness over 40 years. In the name of peace, Vitale has been arrested more than 400 times. Vitale stated that Francis of Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. provided him with inspiration.

Vitale was born in San Gabriel, California and his family operated a lucrative fish processing business. After graduating in 1954 from Loyola University, now Loyola Marymount University, Vitale enlisted in the US Air Force. Vitale's main role in the Air Force was that of an intercept officer, in charge of radio communications. Vitale took his vows as a Franciscan friar in 1960 when he was 28 years old. He was awarded a PhD for original research in sociology in September 1972, from University of California, Los Angeles. From 1979 to 1988, Vitale served as the provincial superior of the

Franciscan Friars of the Province of St. Barbara. He served as the pastor at St. Boniface Catholic Church for 12 years in the Tenderloin of San Francisco, California.

Louis Vitale was one of the founders of Pace e Bene, a nonviolence service, in 1989. The name means Peace and all good. ... Pace e Bene developed educational programs for nonviolent living with an emphasis on spirituality.

In 1981, Vitale received a letter from Rome asking Franciscans to do something creative in 1982 to honor the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis. Vitale took this to heart. The First Nevada Lenten Experience was held at the Nevada test site, a series of witness and protest actions held at the atomic bomb test site near Las Vegas, Nevada. Then, Louis Vitale, along with Anne Bucher, Michael Affleck, Duncan MacMurdy, and two Franciscan friars, Ed Dunn and Terry Symens, founded the Nevada Desert Experience (NDE) in 1984. Over the years, Corbin Harney and the Shundahai Network worked with NDE, holding many protests of the government's continued nuclear weapons work. NDE worked with Corbin Harney in protests against establishing a repository for radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, 100 mi (160 km) from Las Vegas.

Vitale participated in numerous protests and was arrested hundreds of times. Examples include:

April, 2005, Vitale was arrested at the Nevada National Security Site and sent to Beatty Jail to say farewell to the "Justice of the Peace" while simultaneously the Navajo Nation banned uranium mining and Pope Benedict XVI was elected. He and his accomplice were stopping NNSS buses from getting workers to their job sites.

~On November 19, 2006, Vitale was arrested at Fort Huachuca in Arizona with Jesuit Fr. Steve Kelly. They were protesting at the military compound responsible for training the US military in interrogation methods. The

protest was against the US policy of using torture at Abu Gharib and the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp.

~In 2007, Vitale was arrested at Vandenberg Air Force Base protesting Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Testing. Vitale was arrested at the Nevada Test site along with actor Martin Sheen and many others.

~On April 9, 2009, Vitale with John Dear, Eve Tetaz arrested at Creech Air Force Base protesting UAV Drone attacks in Pakistan.

~In October 2009, Vitale and a newlywed couple from New Mexico distributed fliers in Sunnyvale's Lockheed-Martin traffic.

~In November 2009, Vitale crossed the line at Ft Benning to protest the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. He served six months in a federal prison as a result.

~In August 2009, Megan Rice and Louis Vitale were arrested at Vandenberg Air Force Base protesting a test of a Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic missile (ICBM) launched approximately 4,000 miles to the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

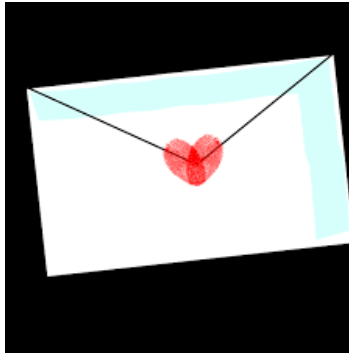
~On December 31, 2009, Vitale planned to join the Gaza Freedom March, but after being stopped by the Egyptian government from making the trek, Vitale joined 22 others in a fast and protest.

~In November 2010, Vitale crossed the line (deliberately trespassing) at Ft Benning to protest the U.S. Army's Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. He served six months at Federal Correctional Institution Lompoc for that action.

~On January 27, 2011, Rice, with Kathy Kelly, John Dear, and Louis Vitale, were convicted of trespassing following a protest against weaponized drones at Creech Air Force Base.[28]

~At the 2012 August Drone convention in Las Vegas, Vitale registered and paid to attend and was threatened with arrest.

[\(This obit for Louis Vitale was lightly edited from Wikipedia\)](#)



Donations, Volunteerism And More....

Thank you for all the donations in response to our recent End of the Year Holiday Fund Appeal!! In addition to your financial donations, EPI values your involvement, your participation at our events, your help in organizing, writing, and getting articles. Please let us know if there are ways in which you would like to work with us!

In order to conserve our natural resources, this issue of *Planted by the Waters* may not have an envelope but we hope you will still contribute. If each person who receives *Planted* puts a check into their own envelope to mail to EPI/CALC, or pays online through [Paypal](https://www.paypal.com) (epicalc@gmail.com), it will greatly improve our ability to do the work for justice and peace which we are called to do together. It doesn't have to be a lot.

Every little bit counts.

I/We want to be part of the Peace and Justice work of Ecumenical Peace Institute/CALC by:

____ volunteering (mailings, vigils, publicity, calling)

____ connecting EPI with my religious group

____ making a tax-deductible contribution:

____ \$10.00 ____ \$25.00 ____ \$35.00 ____ \$50.00

____ \$100.00 ____ (other)

I will pledge \$ _____ monthly, \$ _____ quarterly

Please make checks payable to E.P.I.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State____ Zip _____

Phone_____

Please send us your email address if we don't already have it, to keep up with more online communications and to conserve resources. [your email]_____@_____

[Donate by PayPal](#) 