

Blase Bonpane on WORLD FOCUS,

Kathy Kelly

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Hello, this is Blase Bonpane with World Focus coming to you from KPFK/ Los Angeles. We are podcast and available 24/7 at kpfk.org where we are heard internationally.

Today I'm privileged to have Kathy Kelly as my guest on World Focus. Kathy is a long-time peace activist and author. Kathy was one of the founding members of Voices in the Wilderness and recently a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. As part of peace team work in several countries, she's traveled to Iraq many times, notably remaining in combat zones during the days of both US-Iraq wars, that's two wars. She's been arrested more than sixty times at home and abroad. She's written her experiences as targets of US military bombardment and also with inmates of US prisons. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Nobel Laureate Mairead Maquire.

Welcome, Kathy Kelly.

Kathy: Well hello, Blase. Thanks so much for inviting me.

Blase: Well, it's just a pleasure to have you and I can't help but think about the great legacy of Nelson Mandela today and his early reference to the phrase "apartheid has no future." And, I think that was prophetic and I think we have to see it as an international statement. Apartheid has no future in Israel, in Gaza, no more ethnic highways for one ethnic group only, absolutely no future. It has no future in an economic system that is apartheid in our own country, in a justice system that is two justice systems – one for the reach, one for the

poor. An economic system for the rich and the poor. All of this is apartheid and I think Nelson's message to us is apartheid has no future.

Any thoughts?

Kathy: I'm so glad to hear you underscore what was so apparent throughout his life, that he wanted to educate people and do it through his own actions. Sometimes I think people are maybe feeling vulnerable – I know I am – to saying “Well, this kind of inconvenience – if I get involved with this campaign or that campaign it might cost me some of my income or cost me my job or cost me time away, maybe to do an overnight in jail or longer, and then you think of Nelson Mandela and how his commitment to ending apartheid could survive all the long years in Robbins Island and another prison for 26 or 27 years. And he emerged from that with his values intact. He still remained, throughout his life, such a beacon for pointing to what could be possible, and I think you're right about internationalizing that message and not accepting apartheid anywhere.

Blase: Well, think about it. In spite of all the great things being said about him by US people at this time, especially our politicians, he was on the US government terrorist list until 2008. So it's interesting how we praise the prophets after they die and we crucify them while they're living. He also was very concerned about Palestine. And the Los Angeles Times was horrified that he supported Arafat and Qaddafi and that he attacked the US invading Iraq. So, sometimes we forget what the prophet said, right?

Kathy: I think we have to keep looking in the mirror of how our own country appears. I had been in Baghdad in 2003 and there was great hope that luminaries like Nelson Mandela might yet be able to prevent the war. And then I learned later that he had called President George Bush, Jr., presumably wanting to reason with him before the shock and awe bombing commenced and the White House wouldn't take the call.

Blase: Yes, it's really incredible. Here is his statement about the invasion of Iraq. He said,

“What I am condemning is that one power, with a president who has no foresight and who cannot think properly, is now wanting to plunge the world into a holocaust. If there is a country that has committed unspeakable atrocities in the world, it is the United States of America. They don't care.”

Then White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said in response that “Bush understands there are going to be people who are going to be more comfortable to do nothing about a growing menace that could turn into a holocaust”, etc.

So, I don't think our memory is very good on some of these things. Do you recall that period?

Kathy: Well, I do I recall that Hans von Sponeck who had resigned as the Head of Humanitarian Concerns for the United Nations in Iraq; he's resigned as an act of conscience, and he came over to Baghdad and he was trying mightily to work toward bringing as many world leaders as possible into a common statement, a common view that would be as vigorous and strong as that which Nelson Mandela articulated. And the wars go on. We certainly cannot rest in terms of efforts to try to end the United States military domination with our 700 bases all across the world and with the efforts that still go on to peddle or market our wars as humanitarian wars. And yet, maybe we're starting to see some change. I haven't talked with you for awhile, Blase, but when I came back from Afghanistan in September of this year, and stepped off the plane and realized that it looked so inevitable that we'd be going to war against Syria, I remember sort of feeling a curtain come down, but I was quite wrong. Within days the circumstances changed and it simply wasn't possible for President Obama and his administration to bring the United States into another war. And this doesn't mean that there isn't tremendous suffering going on all across Syria and then the refugee camps nearby. But at least we've been spared the spectacle of US war profiteers

making more money off of the sale of weapons and the peddling of warfare. And it looks as though, there is at least some recognition that going to war against Iran would be a terrible imposition of suffering and damage again in that part of the world. And maybe even some questioning about the usage of economic sanctions against Iranian people.

Blase: Well, just think, the President announced that we were going to attack Syria. The Secretary of State announced we were going to attack Syria. And the people basically said, “No, you’re not.” We had the House of Commons for the first time in I don’t know how many years, rejecting a war. They don’t do that.

Kathy: There is such an interesting quote from the Prime Minister of Britain, David Cameron. He was in a kind of fit of pique, I think, because the Parliament didn’t approve the authorization of the United States war against Syria. He said that the “well of public opinion against war has been right well poisoned by the Iraq episode.” It’s a telling statement. When I think of what’s happening in Iraq today and the constant rounds of explosions and suicide bombers and retaliations and kidnappings and torture, I certainly don’t know how we could ever refer to the Iraq war as an “episode.” But I think what Cameron was really thinking of was the momentous rejection of the 2003 war by public opinion all around the world, so much so that people actually had to speak of the world’s only other super-power, public opinion. And if that’s poisoned the well-springs of war making than maybe some gains are being made.

Blase: Incredible. This was such a great victory and also to lead on to the negotiations with Iran, a country that has not attacked another country in two hundred years. And to begin discussions. The leadership in Israel just seems to be drooling for an attack on Iran and it has been one of the major shifts for Obama to go more with the thoughts of the European nations. We have to negotiate and to see that people are completely capable of rational thinking and have been very responsive to this diplomacy which is so rare in recent times. Mandela was a great one for reconciliation and we see attempts at that in Syria. I had

Mother Agnes-Mariam of the Cross on for a full hour and the venom against that nun is unbelievable. We had three different venues in one day for her to speak, each one being challenged with threats. Finally we were able to get together where she could speak and her interest is in doing what Mandela did which is to have a spirit of reconciliation which doesn't mean "I disagree with you therefore I hate you". It means I disagree with you and let's talk. There are still efforts going on in this horrible situation in Syria and she's one of the few voices for it but, my goodness, she has had all kinds of opposition. Have you been aware of that?

Kathy: Well, I have. I agree that it's important to listen to all sides and as people, themselves, are becoming refugees as people who have nowhere to turn and nowhere to hide, it's a time of tremendous suffering and loss and war isn't over when it's over. It's going to afflict people for a long time to come. I have also wanted to read carefully the messages from Father Paolo, the Jesuit priest who appears to have been disappeared or possibly, he certainly has been kidnapped. We don't know if he's alive or not. He's a Jesuit priest whose writings appear on the front page of the Maryhouse Catholic Worker issue that went out in December and he tried hard to work with people from different faiths and he ran a monastery which welcomed people to come. He wanted to better understand Sunni and Shia Muslim people and to try to bring together Christians and Muslims within Syria. And he really had been able to do that at a time that was so remarkable because people could go and visit and stay. And now I'm afraid that much of that has been completely undone but he has hung on to his vision. In his most recent writings he actually spoke of his hope that somehow there could be a resurrection within Syria of a time when people could again live together.

Blase: Well, I think what we have to look at is the importance of truth commissions, of people being able to say what has happened, and to be able to lay aside the fact of the harm that each one is doing to the other. This looks almost impossible in a place like Syria today.

Kathy: But I think one thing that a country like the United States can do is acknowledge that, you know we have more weaponry than the next eighteen countries combined and our weaponry is staggering, and if we were to say that we no longer want to equip or help organize any militants in a kind of proxy war in Syria and call on Saudi Arabia and Iran and every other country that seems to have a stake in this war that is equipping and arming and training proxy warriors to go and fight. If that could end then there might be a possibility for Syrian civil society to somehow start to sort out the different contingents to the fighting. That step is crucial and we could all call for that. And we could all call for assurance that the refugees won't be starving and freezing to death in terrible refugee camps all along the borders of Syria.

Blase: Kathy, you've been so close to the situation in Afghanistan and we have this very strange situation now where we're threatening to leave if Afghanistan doesn't comply with our wishes and we're threatening to stay if they do comply and I know you have said at various times that it is important for the troops to be there for a time. Could you explain that? I know you've seen it so close and for so long a time. Could you explain your position?

Kathy: Well truthfully, Blase, I don't believe that it's important or rightful for the United States to maintain nine bases as it wants to do under the bilateral security agreement which it's pushing very, very hard for Afghanistan to sign. I don't think the United States maintenance of nine bases and three major airfields is going to lead toward an end to the fighting because I think as long as the Taliban – I mean, they've said it quite clearly that they don't care what your troop level is, if there are any, or they might even say 'infidel' fighters and bases in our country, we'll keep fighting. So the spiral goes on and on and the United States right now is planning to maintain joint special operations forces in Afghanistan. Well, those are your highly trained warriors that do night raids and coordinate drone attacks and call in combat brigade unit aerial attacks and this, of course, exacerbates the hatred and desire for revenge and the sense of fear. And it also contributes to four hundred people every single, every day, fleeing the war, going into already over-crowded cities and moving

into wretched refugee camps because they're afraid that if they were the target of a bombing today by the United States, by the NATO forces, that the Taliban might attack them the next day saying "Well, you were the reason that the attack happened – maybe you gave information to the enemy" so this kind of presumption that spending two billion dollars per week on maintenance of the United States military or, in this year of so-called drawdown, 2.1 billion dollars per soldier per year is going to contribute toward security – Blase, I feel we ought to be paying reparations, reparations for the suffering caused. And when I see these big huge sprawling military bases right across the road from a wretched refugee camp it could break your heart. The trucks are going into the military bases and bringing food and water, clean water and fuel to the NATO forces, to the US forces, there are something like 858,000 contractors also working over there. Well sure, I don't want anybody to be hungry or to be cold during the cold winter that's coming and I'm going over there next week. There's going to be a horrible winter faced by people who have no roof over their heads who are living in the most hard conditions and 600,000 children are working as street vendors. Imagine them out in the streets and they're out there, not because their parents think that's a great idea, but because their parents can't feed the families. And that's what happens as a result of war. We should pay reparations and say we're so sorry for the suffering caused.

Blase: Well, you know if I were designing a program to create terrorists I would say the best way to create a terrorist is to raid someone's home in the middle of the night, terrorizing them, taking away some as prisoners and killing some. I'd say that probably is the best way in the world to create a response, a violent response from people who are innocent and we have continued this night raid disaster for years now. What do we expect to accomplish that way?

Kathy: Well, I think the United States military will say that that's how we get the surveillance capacity. We can take people's cell phones. We can subject people to interrogations. We can find out who the so-called bad guys are. But even General Stanley McChrystal said in 2013 that he believed the arrogance of the drone attacks are actually jeopardizing the

security of people from the United States. I think it is so important that we invoke the Golden Rule. I mean, can you imagine if these night raids were happening all across the United States and if people just didn't know the day or the hour that people would just burst into their homes and hog-tie the men and lock the women in another room. These are despicable acts in the eyes of people from Afghanistan and likewise, the fear that a drone might be doing surveillance and might somehow establish that your home or your school or your mosque or your roadway is a valid spot for a weaponized drone to fire Hellfire missiles or drop a 500 pound bomb. I think that Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai must make statements, vigorous and angry statements, about exactly these kinds of abuses because he has a constituency that would not want it to seem as if he's rolling over and accommodating the US military. But I also think that the US military, the Pentagon and the White House and the State Department are leaning so heavily on him that there's not going to be too much choice. The United States is saying that we want immunity for our troops even though it's part of the past historical record that the United States troops urinated on corpses, burned Qurans, were part of the process of the burning of the Qurans. Sergeant Bales went out and shot seventeen people on a shooting spree that he's been convicted of, but nevertheless the United States insists that no soldier would ever be held accountable and apparently, no American contractor would ever be held accountable in a court in Afghanistan, that only the United States justice systems could be relied upon to bring about justice.

No country in the world would ever accept that! But the United States is going to bully, I think, the Afghan President, the Parliament, the Jirga, and Afghanistan doesn't have very many resources right now that it can turn to and say, "Well we can fix things up ourselves." Right now Afghanistan is a broken country and certainly the United States has designs on the rare earth elements under the Hindu Kush Mountains and on the natural gases and fossil fuels that surround the Caspian Sea and wants very much to build roadways to extract those resources, build a pipeline to extract those resources, and to then control the pricing and the flow of Afghanistan's resources so that the United States can have an upper hand in relation to China and Russia.

Blase: Well, let's take a simple look here, Kathy, at Iraq and Afghanistan. You've spent so much time in Iraq and now allegedly our troops have left and Iraq seems to be in a full-scale warfare. Thousands of people have been killed this year. It goes on week after week, day after day. It began as a Sunni-dominated nation, shifting to Shia and relating more to Iran but what has been accomplished in Iraq?

Kathy: Well again, I think that the United States must accept the responsibility for much of what has happened. When the United States came in as an occupying power there was no control over the borders that would prevent entrance of various kinds of fighters from other countries and all manner of weaponry. The United States itself brought many, many weapons into the country, left them there and then also supplied an al-Qaeda group that was developed to challenge the Shia military of the Mehdi army. So it was the desires for retaliation, the desires for land grabs and control of resources grew. The United States sort of just sat back and watched. I don't think the United States should intervene militarily but I do believe that the United States could influence the usage of proxy armies fighting in Iraq and the same is true of those that are fighting in Syria and those that are fighting in Afghanistan.

Blase: That's the issue. That should be the role, of course, and we do have the presence of the United Nations and the sad thing to me is the very hostile relationship we maintain with the United Nations. I think that they have the structures that could be very effective in bringing about a peace, a lasting peace, in Iraq but it doesn't seem to be taking place. What are your thoughts on that?

Kathy: Well, it's as though you might say the United Nations is the only structure that does have some capacity. When we look at the amount of money that's spent on maintaining military presences as opposed to what the United States would devote toward trying to help expand the United Nations capacities to make a difference in terms of negotiation and diplomacy and of course these essential ingredients of clearing out the landmines, of helping

people find an incentive to use their land for something other than planting opium, for instance, in Afghanistan, helping people rebuild their education structures, improve women's literacy – these are all things that the United Nations is dedicated to and the United Nations was founded to eliminate the scourge of warfare. It's not a perfect institution and certainly I think the whole idea of the Security Council is a misguided and dangerous notion but we do have the General Assembly of the United Nations and we do have the United Nations programs like the world food program and the United Nations environmental protection that clears landmines from areas that are littered with these kinds of hideous weapons. We have the UNHCR, the High Commission on Refugees but I also think that the media could give much, much more attentiveness to the conclusions of people who are on the ground working with the United Nations and trying to solve these tremendous problems instead of constantly turning to the generals, instead of constantly turning to the corporation-sponsored think tanks in order to get commentary about what's happening in our world.

Blase: I'd like our listeners to know that I'm speaking to long-time peace activist and author, Kathy Kelly, one of the founding members of Voices in the Wilderness and recently a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. As part of peace team work in several countries, she's traveled to Iraq many times, notably remaining in combat zones during the days of both US-Iraq wars. Imagine friends, 1991 to the present, to accomplish the destruction of that country. It's unbelievable. She's been arrested more than sixty times at home and abroad. She's written her experiences as targets of US military bombardment and also with inmates of US prisons. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Nobel Laureate Mairead Maquire.

We're just so happy to have you with us today and I see that you're part and parcel of a new document which is put together by David Swanson, David Hartsough, George Lakey, David Jan Passion, Mike Ferner, Colleen Kelly, Ruth Benn, Leah Bolger, Nathan Schneider, Hakim, Paul Chappell, Colin Archer, Kathy Kelly, and more. It's called "Ending All War: An Idea Whose Time Has Come---For Our Children and All Future Generations." I have read that

document twice on this program in its entirety as I think it's so important. Would you care to comment on that particular action?

Kathy: It seems inarguable to me that given the real terrors that we're facing, the terror of what we're doing to our environment, the terror of our inability right now to come up with effective solutions to climate change and the ravages that it's beginning to exercise on the planet, that of course we need to take all of our resources away from the foolish and the brutal and lethal spending that's gone on at the hands of the Pentagon and direct those resources to problem-solving that would help our beleaguered planet and would help every human being living on the planet and make those who are the most impoverished the number one priority. So I am really glad to see that David Swanson works so tirelessly in his latest book, "War No More", in his outreach to people from across the spectrum of movements – environmental, humanitarian, justice movements – to say, "Can we collaborate? Can we can try now to create a movement?" and that's a tall order. I think once people begin to think about past movements that seemed to be ill-fated and then were able to make huge gains, there is some reason for hope. I think the image that David refers to often is of two duelists once upon a time. If two people had a grievance against each they might don a cloak and pick up a weapon and pace off fifteen steps and turn around and shoot. And now we think what a crazy thing to do – but what about mass slaughter that's been caused by war after war after war.

Blase: I see it as simply another form of slavery, that wars are fought by slaves and the people who fight them are told they'll do what they're told or they're subject to execution as deserters. This has been in the air for a long time. I can't help but recall a very important book called "Abolishing the War System: The Disarmament and International Law Project of the Institute for Policy Studies and the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy." That was put together by Marcus Raskin who was the project director and the whole idea was exactly the same. This book was originally produced in 1992 and it gives a legal structure for abolishing the war system and it does identify the war system with slavery, saying that it's a very similar

situation. This committee was at that time, chaired by Richard Falk who's done such a great job as a representative at the UN and he's just going out of office and we think that maybe Phyllis Bennis might be taking his place.

Kathy: Oh my goodness; that's wonderful news!

Blase: So I think we want to have this continuity continue and then, of course, with the 50th anniversary of John Kennedy's murder we have an amazing work. Again, we sometimes forget our own literature, going back to 1972 called "The Improbable Triumvirate: An Asterisk to a History of a Hopeful Year, 1962-1963" by Norman Cousins about how he acted as a liaison between Kennedy, Pope John XXIII and Nikita Khrushchev, quietly working for peace and their work was discovered by the military industrial people and then John spoke about it as his famous talk at American University shortly before he was assassinated because he made it clear that he was going to end this system and it wasn't just the Cold War. He wanted to end the entire arms race and the entire war system and that was a terrible threat to people who had been making money on war for decades. I think Lincoln was the first President to acknowledge his disgust and the fear; he said, "This frightens me more than the war that people are making so much money on this war by creating shoddy equipment and making money for themselves." He thought this was the worst part of the whole thing and it's gotten worse every year since.

So, many of us think, together with James Douglass, that this is what led to Kennedy's elimination and that no President since has stood up to the war system as John did when he said "I'm going to break the CIA into 1,000 pieces." And, with all of his faults, whatever they may be, the point was that he could see that we're going to wind up in a nuclear confrontation and Nikita Khrushchev told him that he was terrified by the confrontation. Kennedy was terrified by what they had one and they had to put a stop to it.

Kathy: It's amazing to think of 28 page handwritten letters being exchanged between the two of them and the conclusion that they both arrived at, that the greatest threat that they faced was the one that they faced personally from their own generals.

Blase: Bobby Kennedy, Jr. just wrote that the final letters from Khrushchev were not allowed to reach the President. That's the article that Bobby just wrote about his uncle and the final sentence, I believe, said that the State Department intervened with that correspondence and John never saw the final letters.

Kathy: It's important for the research to continue and for a voice to be given to those who are doing that kind of research and I think that it's good that RFK, Jr. – in fact he's at Pace University where I just had a chance to be with students there for three days straight and to realize that there are many people all across the country with Peace and Justice Studies programs, with service programs, trying to help and to equip a new generation with the analysis and with the perspective that can help them create a more livable world.

Blase: It's very popular. Our people want it. Eisenhower knew that they wanted it and Johan Galtung has spoken so many times about the need for a peace system. He said "I love the American republic. I hate the American empire." He realized the destructiveness of having troops in over a hundred countries. As Nelson said about apartheid, "This has no future. It cannot continue." Many people seem to understand that and I think they know and are beginning to see the direct relationship in a cut of what will amount to 40 billion dollars in food stamps and a perpetual war system. They can't help but see the relationship between spending billions of dollars a week in ruining other nations and the deterioration that is taking place here at home. In this Los Angeles area we have 600,000 food-insecure children, in one major area. This is the kind of thing that, fortunately, the Pope is beginning to speak about and it is absolutely unacceptable. Do you think that people see the relationship between perpetual war and the absolute deterioration of the homeland.

Kathy: Well, I'm here in New York City where there are 50,000 people without homes, without shelter – they're in some form of public shelter and of course there are many more who don't make it into the shelters. How can people not see and yet there's so much to distract us from thinking about the adult issues that ought to be front and center so that we can create a better world for the children. I'd like to say that efforts are afoot globally and maybe some momentum can be created just by the sheer number of people all around the world who are promoting people's movements, striving for fairness and justice and being able to feed a hungry world and eradicate the diseases that afflict people and the socioeconomic inequities. And I think that, again and again, people turn toward militarism and see that as the heart of the problem. Militarism and greed. I'll be a guest of youngsters in Afghanistan who impress me so much. Right now they're diving into the multiple tasks of having to create the heavy blankets and duvets that will be distributed to people for whom it makes the difference between life and death, people who are living in refugee camps or widows and orphans who get shoved up the mountainside. But they're also trying to design an international conference that would happen with young people from all around the world. They're on skype phone calls with the youngsters in South Korea who are part of the Jeju Island resistance to construction of a US military base there. They're passionate in their desire to be in touch with students and student movements like the one in Chile. And I think that as different groupings begin to connect with one another and encourage each other, we may find that there's a momentum, a kind of globalized momentum amongst young people saying that they recognize they're unalterably moving into a critical time and that they are going to need resources to meet the problems they really are facing. They're calling their movement Border Free that they don't want to be constrained by the artificial borders that would try to separate us.

Blase: Well, I think it's essential because the nation-state is as outdated as the old city states. It has no future. It's incapable of changing anything. It's incapable of saving the ocean, the one singular ocean we have. It's incapable of saving the atmosphere. We have just one atmosphere around this planet and the time for internationalism is long overdue.

Thinking in terms of nationalism is just absolutely outdated. Suppose we would agree that any production of so-called defense material would be non-profit? Wouldn't that have quite an impact on the future of war? You may manufacture your tank for crowd control or whatever but there will be no profit any more than there is supposed to be a profit in the police force or the fire department or the libraries or in the public sector. Don't you think that an economic shift of that kind would have an impact on warfare?

Kathy: I surely would like to see the plug pulled on the war profiteering and I think Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer has a lot to teach us about these ideas. He clarifies that the idea of a government being necessary and justified because of protection to give us security is something that's been manipulated a great deal. What about a government designed to promote liberty and fraternity and the pursuit of happiness? What about a government designed to enable peace? But instead we've gotten sort of bamboozled into thinking that the purpose of governments is to provide us with security but then it sort of morphs into being purposeful to provide the 1%, the people who already have so much and feel like they're entitled to get more to secure their status quo. And then that will warrant and justify creating huge weapons systems and then suddenly the rest of the people are supposed to pay for those weapons systems that enable the protection of the completely unwarranted capitalistic greed on the part of small elites. This is unacceptable and I think if people could see it head-on, see it squarely for what it is and what affect it has on their families and their capacity to meet their families' needs, then I think people would say, "We don't want to support this," but instead we're constantly bombarded with distractions, so much of it related to sports and entertainment. But I do think that it's changing and I'm glad you mentioned the Pope. This Pope is like a horse that's gone out of the stable and is galloping. Keep your eyes on that Pope. And today, he's been willing to acknowledge the afflictions that have been caused by pedophilia and the terrible child abuse and that he doesn't want to look the other way. So I think being able to say we're not going to be bystanders and look the other way or try to pull the wool over people's eyes. This is a good step and we must hope, really hope that somehow others who are in positions of leverage and leadership can

also say that they'd like to join that grouping of people that's willing to tell the truth about the world that we live in.

Blase: I think we're seeing the beginning of a new consciousness. It was so wonderful to see the people coming out, striking against Walmart and the horrendous wage of poverty that so many of our workers are earning. We've seen hundreds of demonstrations this very week, and I know even here in the LA area my wife works with people who work forty hours a week and are homeless. Is that any kind of fairness? Living in their car or living on the street and working 40, 50, 60 hours a week because they will never have a first, last and security deposit to get into an apartment. And the consciousness is growing to such an exciting level that many of our young people would much prefer a democratic socialist perspective than the terrible poor distribution at this time.

Kathy: I'm so glad to know that Theresa's work is helping to raise consciousness. Theresa Bonpane. Michelle Alexander's book, "The New Jim Crow" remains such an important piece of work so that we can understand how it is that the prison industrial complex has, in a systemized way, helped to force people into the ranks of homelessness and joblessness. And of course that's ideal for those who want to keep wages down. As long as you've got a vast number of people who are unemployed, then you'll have people vying for jobs that don't come near meeting their greatest needs. And then people turn to the industry where they can perhaps earn money when the flood of drugs comes into this country and it's possible to make money in the drug wars.

Blase: Well, you know the final thing I want to talk to you about, Kathy, is the work done here recently by Pax Christi International dealing with the ongoing violence in Syria and the suffering of the Syrian people. They came up with a program for preventing genocide and they are speaking about two to three million refugees, most of whom are in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, five million Syrians displaced internally. Many have been displaced

many times, coming from Iraq into Syria, now Syria back into Iraq. And Pax Christi has come up with this statement. Have you seen their approach to the problem?

Kathy: Yes, I did see that and I was very pleased to see it. I hope that the countries that are part of Pax Christi International and all of the different chapters will get together and give support and also let their elected officials know that there are alternatives that have been raised and that war is not inevitable.

Blase: Indeed. They made it clear that they're calling globally, as well as in the European Union, for a shift away from border protection for protection of people, guaranteeing refugee status to Syrians who are fleeing the country and by placing barriers of any kind Syrians will undertake more dangerous crossings and further place them at the mercy of smugglers. So the responsibility to shelter Syrian refugees cannot be left only to the neighboring countries. They need the assistance, as Pax Christi brings out here, from the UN in calling on Ban Ki-Moon announcing the Geneva II Peace Conference to be held in January of 2014. Is there any hope that this is going to make a difference?

Kathy: I surely hope so. Just looking at Jordan which is a country where, since 1991, there's been an absorption of refugees coming from Iraq at a time when 60% of the population already were, some of them made-twice refugees, coming from the West Bank and from Gaza because of course, Israel. It's a country that has been, I think, saddled really, with a constant flow of refugees and it's, to me, extremely sad because I think that maybe of the Jordanians would like to have their hearts open to the world, would like to say "Yes, we can embrace you. We can bring you into our economy, our school system, our healthcare delivery system", but they clearly have been overwhelmed by multiple generations of people who sought refugee there. And what kind of help do they get from the United States? The United States has, I don't think, come anywhere near giving the level of assistance that would be required in order for people to have a humane existence and be able to share living together and the United States has bullied Jordan quite often and said if you don't

subordinate yourself to serve our national interest than we'll make it impossible for your economy to persist.

Blase: I recall seeing people pouring into Jordan from Iraq and I know people have been pouring in for decades now and such small countries need help. Pax Christi concludes with suggestions that demonstrations be organized to demand ceasefires by all parties to enable civilians to safely exit besieged areas. Some areas are starving and people can't get out and to demand a ceasefire overall, and to demand an end to the bombing of medical facilities and safe passage for medical workers, medical supplies and patients. All of this needs to be done in the regime, as well as those armed forces who have committed crimes against humanity be held accountable before the International Criminal Court.

So, these are the thoughts that are coming from this institution, Pax Christi, and we have hopes that they will be heard because it's such a horrible situation. How do you feel about those points that they make about the ceasefire, etc?

Kathy: I think those are essential points and I think it's important that non-governmental organizations be able to disseminate these ideas and that there should be a willingness to listen to people, especially those who've had people on the ground working in the region and within Syria. You know, Blase, I think back to what would seem like such a long time ago to your listeners, but in 1991 I was in Jordan with a group of people who had just come out of Iraq and we had come through an area where there were horrid refugee camps on both sides of the border. We got to Amman, Jordan and we put our heads together and we started to think about to whom can we turn for advice and to whom can we turn for some endorsement of an idea that we had about being able to bring medical supplies back into the country while the wars still went on. And do you know, the first name that came up was yours? My friend, Jean Drese said, "Well, let's get in touch with Blase Bonpane" and it just made me feel so hopeful and so happy that somebody who I regarded all my life as an activist as a guiding person who believes in pacifism, who believes in nonviolence, who

believes that we really can change the world, and here I was with people from multiple places all around the world and the name that came up for wisdom and guidance was yours.

Blase: Well, thank you so much, Kathy. I deeply appreciate that and I remember all the way back to that January of 1991. Can you believe it? The years that have gone by and that horrible blitzkrieg that was conducted by the elder Bush in January of '91, massacring people in Iraq. I want to thank you, Kathy Kelly, for being with us today. She's been my guest on World Focus, been a long time activist, one of the founding members of Voices in the Wilderness and Voices for Creative Nonviolence. And this goes back to the days of two US-Iraq wars and she's been arrested more than sixty times at home and abroad.

We're just so happy to have you with us today. Any final thoughts for us, Kathy?

Kathy: Blase, thanks for inviting me to be with you during this time. If any of your listeners would be interested, we are going to host a peace school in Chicago – or maybe a peace retreat – during the month of March. So if you have any young people who might be on their spring break and might want to come to be with us during that time, we'll do our best to make sure that the beat goes on. And of course we'll be in touch with the Afghan Peace Volunteers. On the 21st of every month they have a phone call that they invite people to be a part of for a global day of listening. You go to GlobalDayofListening.org and I'll be with them on the 21st of this month so that would be a great way to tune in.

And if anybody is interested in the duvet project, they can go to our website at vcnv.org.

But mostly I just want to thank you, Blase, and wish you well and know that everything you've said today will stay on my mind as I think about legacy of Nelson Mandela.

Blase: Thank you so much, Kathy.

