

Global Neighbours and Justice
Notes for Hon. David Kilgour, J.D.,
Concordia University Texas, Austin,
Robert C. Greene Endowed Lecture in Service-Learning
11:00 a.m. & 12 p.m.
Auditorium
November 7, 2018



The preamble of the 1945 United Nations Charter pledged member states 'to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours'. A similar ideal inspired the League of Nations earlier in the 20th century, but long before leaders spoke of 'the human family'. In 1945, the terror and devastation of WW2, including the loss of 50-60 million lives, led the victors to rethink how to rebuild while seeking to learn from catastrophic mistakes made in the 1930s and '40s.

The new strategy was to create institutions capable of providing peaceful ways to diffuse conflicts between nations. In parallel, defensive military alliances, such as NATO and NORAD, provided muscle to deter the use of arms. This side of the international infrastructure became more important as the Cold War with the Soviet Union, a former WW2 ally, worsened. On the economic side were new institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Today, never before have so many nations had so much in common, yet the issues that divide us have rarely been so obvious. Tensions abound. The more peoples accept the logic of the growing interdependence of the human family on issues like climate change and cleaning up our oceans, the more they should seek opportunities to overcome destructive notions of 'otherness' and 'separateness', and to find ways to live and work together. Initiatives for institutional and other changes seem best grounded in universal values that speak to many challenges facing the world.

Effective global governance requires in my view democratic institutions and the rule of law. The need for multi-party democracy arises out of the close linkage between legitimacy and effectiveness. Institutions that lack legitimacy are seldom effective over the long run. Equality before the law is essential to guard against the temptation to

authoritarianism--the predilection of the strong and greedy to impose their will and exercise dominion over the weak. Democracy has to do with the exercise of power and the recognition that imposition and coercion, however contrived, are unacceptable and in the end unworkable.

It often comes to how individuals live their lives and exercise responsibility themselves or with others. Here are some elements of a global ethic and some representative individuals and groups who practise these values:

1. Freedom of Speech

(John 8:32: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”)



Jamal Khashoggi

Since Jamal Khashoggi - the well-known Saudi Arabian journalist - went into its consulate in Istanbul on October 2, oceans of words have underlined the importance of freedom of speech to good governance. In his final *Washington Post* column, Khashoggi criticized the Saudi lead role in the ongoing brutal Yemen conflict (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/reader-center/yemen-photos>).

After more than two weeks of denials, the Saudi regime admitted that he had been murdered within the consulate. Since Muhammad bin Salman (MBS) became crown prince, many dissidents have been imprisoned, most held without trial. All attempts to whitewash what was done to Khashoggi have mercifully failed. Sanctions from many national parliaments against the regime if it is found guilty by the court of responsible international opinion seem inevitable.

The world has also seen Turkey's president Recep Erdogan pretend to be a protector of journalists despite being the world's leading jailer of them and having shut down an estimated 180 media agencies across Turkey.



**Bill Browder (L) and
Sergei Magnitsky**

Bill Browder, an American-born financier, moved to Russia in the 1990s as the grandson of a former general secretary of the U.S. Communist Party, seeking by his own admission to become “the biggest capitalist in Russia.” For a decade, he was the country’s largest portfolio foreign investor, but his crime in the eyes of the Kremlin came later, after he had been expelled from Russia in 2005.

In 2008, his Moscow lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, [uncovered](#) a tax scam involving government officials that defrauded Russian taxpayers of \$230 million. He did what any law-abiding citizen would, reporting the crime to the relevant authorities. In return, he was arrested and held in detention without trial for almost a year. He was beaten and died on Nov. 16, 2009, in a Moscow prison.

One year ago, Members of the Canadian House of Commons passed unanimously a bill called *Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act* to expand Canada's international sanctions law to target gross human rights violators. It is Canada's version of the *Magnitsky Act*, a series of U.S. Congressional laws named for Sergei Magnitsky. These laws target the property- the assets, the holdings, the wealth -of corrupt officials “who have committed gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.”

2. Caring for the Natural Environment (Isaiah 24:4-6: “The earth is defiled by its people...”



Mệ Năm “Mother Mushroom”

Mệ Năm of Vietnam participated in numerous public protests calling for a cleaner environment. Her blog posts were critical of Chinese bauxite mining on the Spratly and Paracel islands.

In 2016, a massive fish kill occurred in Viet Nam as a result of negligent chemical handling. Mệ Năm, who protested, was convicted in 2017 and at the age of 26 was sentenced to ten years in prison. The Asia director of Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that her only crime was to speak her mind and fight for human rights.

Earlier this month, Mẹ Năm, earlier named the Civil Rights Defender of the Year (2015), the International Women of Courage recipient (2017) and nominated for a Nobel Prize (2018), was unexpectedly released from prison and left Vietnam for exile in the United States, landing in Houston with her elderly mother and two children. She vows that she will continue to raise her voice for the natural environment and human dignity in Vietnam.

3. Practising *moderation* **(Philippians 4:5: “*Let your moderation be known unto all men*”).**

We should give full support to those who share our tenets of moderation and such persons in all spiritual communities should reach out to one another to encourage the universal values of tolerance and peace. Permit me to draw your attention to two moderate religious movements, which align well with Christian values: Bahá'í and Gülen/Hizmet Movement.



A Bahá'í temple

The Bahá'í faith is a moderate, tolerant religion, teaching the essential worth of all religions, and the unity and equality of all people. Established by Bahá'u'lláh in 1863, it initially grew in Iran and parts of the Middle East, where it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception.

Last year, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Asma Jahangir, reported that there were then 90 Baha'is in prison in Iran, all reportedly detained on charges related solely to their religious beliefs and practices. The list included seven Baha'i leaders who had received 10-year sentences and were still in prison for allegedly “disturbing national security”, “spreading propaganda against the regime”, and “engaging in espionage”.

The Baha'i Faith is a world religion with members in 235 countries and territories, and with 184 National Spiritual Assemblies. As of 2015, there were an estimated 300,000 Baha'is in the U.S. and 30,000 in Canada.



The Gülen/Hizmet Movement: Fethullah Gülen

In 1999, Turkish cleric/preacher Fethullah Gülen, who had been a political ally of Recep Erdogan when both were seeking a more democratic Turkey, moved to Pennsylvania. He is now 77-years old and is still living in exile in the U.S.

After a brief failed coup in Turkey in July 2016, which then prime minister Erdogan termed “a gift from God”, nearly 40,000 people were arrested and about 110,000 public servants were dismissed. Erdoğan blamed the coup on the followers of Gülen. All those arrested and dismissed were accused of having links to the Gülen movement (known as Hizmet “service”), which the Turkish government has bizarrely branded a terrorist organization out to topple the government. As a result, many Hizmet schools and affiliated organizations have also been shut down. Erdogan has urged the U.S. to arrest and extradite Gülen, but fortunately, your government has decided not to do so.

The Gülen/Hizmet movement is a transnational Islamic social movement that advocates universal access to education, civil society, and peace, inspired by Gülen’s religious teachings which center on a form of Sufi Islam - a modern, moderate Islam. Hizmet is a faith-inspired civil society movement that seeks to create a culture of coexistence within universal, humanist values.

4. Showing *compassion for migrants*

(1 John: 3-18: “Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth.”



Angela Merkel

In 2015, as tens of thousands of refugees were arriving on Europe's shores and trekking north to find a new home, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, a moderate Christian in office for a decade, insisted that extremism and racism must be confronted not only in Germany but “no matter where it happens in the world.”

That year Merkel made two decisions that would come to define her tenure. On August 25, she chose to allow Syrian refugees fleeing a brutal civil war who had already registered elsewhere in the European Union to enter Germany and register there, temporarily suspending an EU law that requires asylum seekers to be returned to the first country they entered.

On September 4, Merkel relaxed controls on the border with Austria, allowing tens of thousands of refugees stranded in Hungary to enter Germany. Her open-door refugee policy was the epitome of a compassionate approach to migration. Merkel recently defended Germany accepting 10,000 UN refugees, whom the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has deemed particularly in need of protection. She insisted that letting in legal migrants from a UN program would help head off illegal migration by replacing it with legal migration. The chancellor described it as an attempt to open up legal avenues for refugees-to prevent practices such as human trafficking.

Migration is divisive issue German politics as a whole and within Angela Merkel's parliamentary party. Many of her conservative colleagues insist that Germany enforce a hard cap of 220,000 people allowed to enter the country annually. The UN refugees will count toward that number.

Migrants from Honduras & Central America

The caravan of migrants which set out from violence-plagued Honduras through El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico towards the U.S. border began just before yesterday's high-stakes midterm elections in your country and evidently became a key issue in the elections.

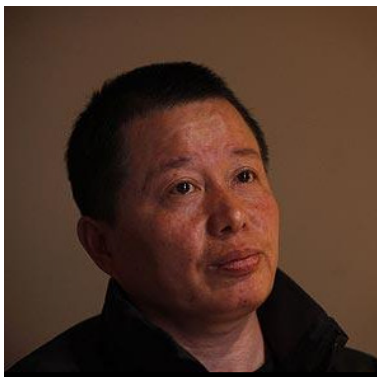


caravan of migrants from Honduras

One view is that it could become an assault on the US border and that the US must boost border security and crack down on illegal immigration. Others feel that that the administration may be trying to create a crisis to motivate its voter base.

5. Respect for different communities

(Zechariah 7:9: "... Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another".)



Gao Zhisheng, often called "the conscience of China", received a second nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008. He became a Christian after attending a Beijing house church in 2005, concluding, "In addition to physical needs, (human beings have) equally important spiritual needs..."

He later gained international acclaim for donating his lawyers' skills to defend evicted farmers, miners, underground Christians, dissidents, and disabled persons.

His criticism of the Beijing party-state's persecution of the large Falun Gong community, a traditional exercise group with a spiritual component (www.endorganpillaging.org), triggered weeks of torture. It ended only when he agreed to "confess" in a false article saying that the government treated his family well and that Falun Gong had tricked him into writing a letter to the U.S. Congress. His wife and two children were able to escape China and now live in California.

Shortly after his release for a brief period, Gao wrote a letter detailing his ordeal and authorized its release to the public, even though he had been threatened with death if he spoke publicly about his torture. His latest book, *Unwavering Convictions*, is co-published by the American Bar Association (and is featured on my website (www.david-kilgour.com)).

Permit me to add that the party-state in Beijing has been pillaging the vital organs of prisoners of conscience, primarily Falun Gong practitioners, but also Uyghur Muslims and Christians, for years. It began in 2001 for Falun Gong; David Matas and I estimate in our book, *Bloody Harvest*, that for 41,500 transplants done across China in the years 2000-2005 the sources beyond any doubt were Falun Gong prisoners of conscience. We located 18 kinds of evidence that led to this conclusion. Ethan Gutmann's 2014 book, *The Slaughter*, explains how he arrived at his best estimate that the organs of 65,000 Falun Gong and "two to four thousand" Uyghurs, Tibetans and Christians were "harvested" in the 2000-2008 period.

In June, 2016, the 3 of us released in Washington, Ottawa and Brussels an Update (www.endorganpillaging.org), which concludes that a minimum of 60,000 transplants are being done yearly across China as of mid-2016, not the 10,000 range the Beijing government claims. These inhuman operations, we estimate, bring \$8-9 billion to all those involved. I invite you all to join our International coalition to end organ abuse in China, which you can do quickly at www.endorganpillaging.org.

6. Respect for Minorities

The security of many minorities is imperiled by the culture of violence that has infected some societies, with a consequent loss of respect for human life. This trend is in some cases linked to political extremism of one kind or another, but elsewhere it is part of a breakup of the value systems that give stability to societies. The sanctity of life is a concept shared by people of all faiths as well as by secular humanists. Dealing with the political, economic, social, or other causes of violence and promoting the principle of non-violence must be vital objectives of all governance.

Nelson Mandela: *I say to all those leaders, do not look the other way. Do not hesitate ... It is within your power to avoid a genocide of humanity.*

Kofi Annan: *A genocide begins with the killing of one man - not for what he has done, but because of who he is.*



Nadia Murad, 2018 Nobel Peace Prize

In late 2014, Islamic State fighters (ISIS) rounded up the Yazidi community in the village of Kojo in northern Iraq. The ISIS fighters killed about 600 people – including six of Nadia Murad's brothers and stepbrothers – and took the younger women into slavery. They were forced to pray and then they were sold as “sabia” – slaves.

After three months, Nadia Murad was able to escape after her captor accidentally left the house unlocked. She was taken in by a family, who were able to smuggle her out of the ISIS-controlled area and is now an Iraqi Yazidi human rights activist living in Germany. On October 5, Nadia Murad was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for her effort to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict."

CONCLUSION

Having observed faith communities around the world, I'm struck by how similar their answers to the question of how we can live our faiths today. Many people of all ages in many lands attempt in their daily lives to be points of light wherever they are.

Grace – God's love for all humanity– merits the final word. Only places of worship can provide it in a world which craves it. Grace can bring transformation and hope. As Philip Yancey expressed in his book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, it is hunger for grace that brings people to any place of worship. "I rejected the church for a time because I found so little grace there," he writes. "I returned because I found grace nowhere else." In a world filled with 'ungrace,' we believers of all faiths should seek to dispense grace wherever we find ourselves.

Moses stood before the power structure of Egypt to declare that Hebrew lives matter. Esther intervened on behalf of her people when the Persian king labeled Jews illegal. And the state put Jesus to death by crucifixion, a form of execution reserved for those who dared to challenge imperial power. The Bible gives pride of place to those—who like Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Rosa Parks in our world—stood up for a higher moral law in their world.

Let me close with this: The ministry of an unknown man in the furthest reaches of the Roman Empire lasted only three years and appeared to end with his execution in 30AD.

According to John's Gospel, even his half-brother James did not believe Jesus was the son of God until he met with him face to face after his resurrection. St Paul records that post-resurrection encounter in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. Like so many of us, James needed to discover—to encounter—the amazing grace of Jesus. Now twenty centuries later, an estimated two billion people across the world worship him. It is something for all of us to ponder.

We must also ponder the negative events that have been occurring in your country recently and pray for the coming together and reunification of Americans rather than the polarization and divisiveness that is pulling apart your fine nation.

Many around the world today know that religion, race, etc. are unnecessary barriers only in our minds. We all need hearts and minds full of grace and love. This is the better future we may or might not see. Be the leaders who unite the world and serve humanity.

-30-