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The Meaner Trump Gets...

“When someone stands up to violence a force for change is released. Every action for peace requires someone to exhibit the courage to challenge violence and inspire love.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh

In this difficult and traumatic holiday season it struck me tonight that a remarkable phenomenon is occurring. With desperate migrants on the move around much of the planet and authoritarian forces frantically erecting barricades, both literal and figurative, to turn them back, this country has shown it is not immune to the global dynamic. But the meaner Donald Trump gets, the more kindness the evolved among us seem to feel.

In our household we're getting Christmas cards from unexpected sources, such as my 7-year-old grandson in Colorado, and a dear friend who turned a photograph of us into a greeting card of thank you and remembrance. Houses in southern New Mexico's Mesilla Valley are aglow with extraordinary displays of welcoming lights. Cash-challenged charitable organizations are working overtime to remember those in need. A former president dons Christmas garb to distribute gifts to children.

Outside a cold full moon rises beside a stationary lenticular cloud that glows with eerie luminescence like an inscrutable mother ship. One can't help speculating about some kind of confluence, though tonight it remains as Churchill would have said, a riddle wrapped in an enigma.

The government is in partial shutdown again, with 750,000 workers furloughed or expected to work without scheduled pay, just in time for the holidays. The president is going off the rails over funding for his “border wall,” while a senator noted dryly the only

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wall he'll get is the one closing in on him from Robert Mueller. After a phone call with Turkey's authoritarian, Trump summarily yanked 2,000 troops out of Syria, abandoning Kurdish allies and thus precipitating the resignation under protest of his Defense secretary. He is increasingly isolated in his own White House, making decisions that grow more impulsive and dangerous by the day. In banishing those who would disagree with him he now truly keeps his own demented counsel.

Meanwhile, Central American refugees seeking asylum under federal statute and international protocols are turned away from ports of entry, channeled toward life-threatening desert crossings, told to wait months or more likely years in Mexico. Acts of racism, anti-Semitism, hate crimes and mass shootings are on the upswing, in some cases exponentially.

Yet the midterm elections showed we also have an awakening populace, as women and minorities ran for and won elective races in record numbers, despite criminal voter suppression and outrageous gerrymandering. People are organizing on grassroots levels to foster change and accomplish it—in sustainable farming, maker spaces, arts and crafts cooperatives, intentional communities and centers of culture and learning. Creative expression is finally becoming acknowledged as a force for change.

In the vacuum created by the shameless example of the most powerful human in the free world—while he demonstrates daily that he is also the smallest, weakest, most petty and insecure—others are rediscovering their own humanity. In stark contrast to the example of Trump's utter narcissism, we recently grieved the loss of a very human and dedicated public servant, George H. W. Bush, even as many of us acknowledged our deep disagreements over policy. A couple of years ago some of us might not have been quite so moved at his passing, or that of John McCain, but now we mourn them as an all-but-vanished breed.

As we sit under that cold moon tonight, there is no telling if the goodness in human hearts will triumph over the fear, anger and violence in those who refuse to relinquish so much as a thread of the gilded garments in which they cloak themselves, though they may sing seasonal songs of peace on earth and goodwill toward men as they do every year around this time. In their very unChristlike behavior they reek of hypocrisy, but they are armed and they are desperate. It will take all the good within us to subdue them or, better yet, awaken them.