

The Danville News
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"Walking on Broken Glass"
Word Count: 750

Did you catch "Our National Parks," the documentary about wild places narrated by Obama? Hope so, although not everyone could because Netflix featured it. Danville's schools should show it in science classes. A theme runs through all five episodes: All nature is interconnected.

Examples? The plodding footsteps of Sumatran Elephants form muddy pools essential to the breeding of toads. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, left unmolested from human activity, is recovering its natural state, resulting in kelp forests. These forests collect twenty times more carbon than land forests. Late winter warm currents release heat creating perfect conditions for Canadian Western Monarchs to migrate and breed. The northwest winds stir up nutrients in the sanctuary waters. More examples? The June fog that shrouds the Golden Gate Bridge saturates California's dry soil. When summer turns to fall, so begins the great gathering of jelly fish swarms, anchovies, sea lions, humpback whales, killer whales, dolphin pods, all because sunlight meets the nutrient rich water, incubating microscopic algae called phytoplankton. Green flames spread into the sea observable from space. Phytoplankton creates more oxygen than all rainforests combined.

Pay attention to what we break, this documentary warns. Ocean temperatures are rising, fish stocks plummeting, pollution escalating. The health of climate and oceans is inter-related. Environmental health predicts our fate. Habitat destruction spells our destruction. Ask the Lorax. It's pretty simple. Nature is pick-up sticks.

Here's hoping you also watched on regular television the newest Ken Burns three part documentary, also pretty simple: "The U.S. and the Holocaust." This is a must for schools to show, deserving assemblies. Episode 2 begins with Kristalnacht, "crystal night." November 10, 84 years ago today, German Jews were forced to begin sweeping up broken glass from over 7,500 of their shops and over 1,000 synagogues attacked by the nationalistic mob, the result of Hitler's sick anti-Semitic rhetoric, mockery, and policies, a calculated spasm of Nazi Germany's evil, inciting rioters to sanctioned violence, many of whom brutalized their own neighbors. Count the cost of propaganda's easy hatred. 91 Jews were reported killed, likelier thousands. Over 30,000 Jewish men were arrested, thus expanding the concentration camp industry. The U.S.A.? We remained silent, excepting pro-Hitler Lindbergh who blamed the Jews.

Never again, we say. But it has. It can. It is. It can't. We weren't immune. It's obvious we still aren't. Why do we tolerate such sickness?

My Halloween treat was more trick: Slugged by COVID. The bad head-cold, wasn't. A sore diaphragm from coughing lungs inside out. Swallowing nettles and glass shards. Unhappy intestines. Foggy lethargy. Multiple keyboard mistakes. Swab away. Cranky. The fever and chills tag-team. Bright red lines on the test device. The body invaded, infected, all parts affected. We are our bodies. Sickness, a physician-theologian wrote, changes our relationships, our behavior, our faith, our habits. It forces a reconstruction of the self. Thank God for vaccine boosters, lest, well, I can guess. Hello, Memorial Garden. Shamans, please restore the life-force or cast out the negative invasion. I still hope we want to

heal sickness. Onto the Paxlovid, despite metallic taste buds. Naps, naps, pretending to read. I even drank water.

The book, "The King of Children," introduces us to someone who truly understood what results from untreated social diseases. He was a pediatrician, educator, humanitarian. He was one of the most respected men in Poland, renowned for his work with children, especially orphans, especially Jewish orphans cared for in two Warsaw orphanages. Think the Dr. Spock, Fred Rogers, Dr. Seuss combined of Poland. Then in August, 1942, the Gestapo demanded that his orphans be loaded aboard cattle cars to be transported to Treblinka Extermination Camp. The Nazi's informed Dr. Janusz Korczak that he was too important, so he would remain behind. He refused to abandon his children. At the railroad station Korczak and his staff led his children. All who watched them were silent as he went with his children to the gas chambers.

An eyewitness described the scene: "Janusz Korczak was marching, his head bent forward, holding the hand of a child, without a hat, a leather belt around his waist, and wearing high boots. A few nurses were followed by two hundred children, dressed in clean and meticulously cared for clothes, each carried a blue knapsack and a favorite book or toy, as they were being carried to the altar."

Societies, as nature shows, also are interconnected. Our fates are intertwined. Do you see the children marching in clean clothes, carrying backpacks, holding a special toy?