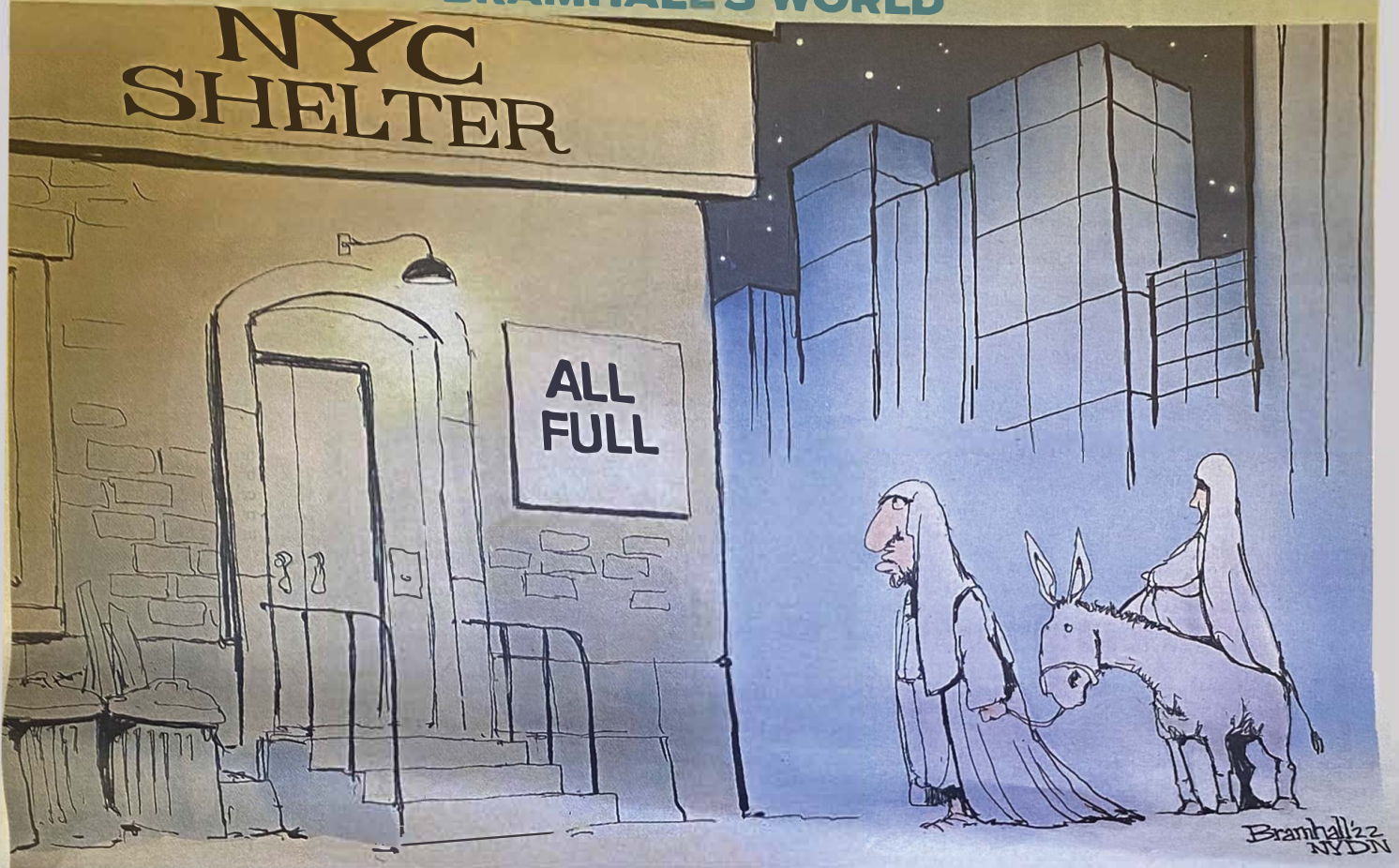


## BRAMHALL'S WORLD



## Faiths pray united for Ukraine Christmas truce

**BE OUR GUEST**

**BY ARIEL GOLD \***

Martin Luther King Jr.

Inspired by the miraculous Christmas truce of 1914, in which 100,000 German and British soldiers put down their weapons for a brief and spontaneous peace along the Western Front, the Fellowship of Reconciliation USA has partnered with the National Council of Elders, CODEPINK, and the Peace in Ukraine Coalition to gather religious leaders to call for a Christmas truce in Ukraine.

In the space of just a few days, a diverse and quickly growing coalition of more than 1,000 faith leaders in the United States, representing believers from every major tradition and every state in the nation have signed our statement calling for a Christmas truce in Ukraine. They have joined the call in the hopes that a temporary ceasefire can provide an opportunity for moral clarity and be a first step toward negotiation and ultimately peace.

The statement reads: "As people of faith and conscience, believing in the sanctity of all life on this planet, we call for a Christmas Truce in Ukraine. In the spirit of the truce that occurred in 1914 during the First World War, we urge our government to

take a leadership role in bringing the war in Ukraine to an end through supporting calls for a ceasefire and negotiated settlement, before the conflict results in a nuclear war that could devastate the world's ecosystems and annihilate all of God's creation."

Initial signers included Rev. Jesse Jackson, Bishop William J. Barber II, Rev. Jim Wallis, Dr. Cornel West and Rabbi Arthur Waskow. Since we launched the statement, the call has rapidly been gathering momentum. Veterans for Peace, a global organization of military veterans, and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition (RPC), an international human and civil rights organization founded by Jackson, have also supported the truce.

Whether it is Christians preparing for Christmas or Jews celebrating the miracle of Chanukah, all the Abrahamic traditions and other communities of faith and conscience around the world embrace the prophetic voice of Isaiah who exhorted us to transform swords into plowshares.

In that first Christmas of World War I, soldiers emerged from their trenches and ventured into the "no man's land" where they shared food and drink; they sang Christmas carols and even played soccer together. It was a potent example of how the human spirit can be a powerful force

that transcends hate and division in the promotion of peace. In 2022, it falls to the moral voices of the world to occupy that no man's land. How long must we witness this escalating death and destruction before we recognize that the answer to war has never been more war?

Negotiation is not a euphemism for capitulation, nor is it a rationalization of Vladimir Putin's aggression. The way out of the war in Ukraine will not be a military solution. And the stakes, the risk of nuclear annihilation are far too high to contemplate. Sadly, the speculation about the potential call for a truce in Zelenskyy's address to Congress didn't materialize. What we got instead was a case for continued financial and military support.

During this winter holiday filled with prayers for peace and liberation, we are praying and acting for the same kind of miracle that over a century ago compelled the soldiers of WWI to put down their weapons and celebrate peace.

In the words of the legendary 20th-century activist, clergyman and FOR-USA member, A.J. Muste "There Is No Way to Peace, Peace Is the Way." The way to peace requires powers of a different sort: negotiation and imagination.

*Gold is executive director of Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FORUSA.org).*

As Volodymyr Zelenskyy prepared to address Congress on Wednesday evening, I'd heard speculation that the Ukrainian president might call for a truce of some kind. Was it possible that he might use this historic moment on the world stage to call for a temporary ceasefire? It wasn't out of the realm of possibility as Pope Francis and others had been issuing calls recently to suspend hostilities so that negotiations could begin to put an end to a war that has already displaced 14 million people and killed countless thousands of civilians and combatants.

As executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation USA, the oldest peace and justice organization in the United States, expanding the borders of what constitutes the realm of possibility is part of my job description. As an interfaith organization, FOR-USA's membership is drawn from institutions and leaders of diverse faith backgrounds. Despite their differences, all of these religious traditions share a common vision of a world where conflicts are resolved nonviolently, where systems that foster fear and hatred are dismantled, and where justice is sought as a basis for peace. Since our founding in 1915, our membership has included three Nobel Peace Prize winners, including Rev.

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Racist pandemic comments may have sparked this wave of violence against Asian Americans, but in many ways it is simply the latest chapter in a much longer story.

Emma Jordan-Simpson and Cathy Kim March 19, 2021



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Prejudice against Asian-Americans is nothing new. Sadly it is as

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We must face the truth: This is America, and this is who we will always be until we can tell ourselves the truth about the lies we keep alive.

Emma Jordan-Simpson January 7, 2021



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Lies have consequences. The insurrection that was attempted as the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives gathered to certify the