

and Appalachia since 2016, some progressive memes remain problematic. One Appalachia-friendly meme, for example, states, “Dolly Parton is from Appalachia. Dolly Parton grew up dirt poor. Dolly Parton worked her ass off to get where she is. Dolly Parton helps kids read and takes care of her people. Dolly Parton has done more to help Americans than most other people can claim. I’ll take Dolly Parton’s Appalachia over JD Vance’s Yale Law School venture capitalist Fascism every day.” To be clear, I adore Dolly Parton as much as anyone. I grew up watching Parton not only on The Porter Wagoner Show but on The Cas Walker Show, a local Knoxville production on which she appeared before hitting it big. As the meme suggests, Parton has spent millions of dollars to improve children’s literacy and education and other philanthropic efforts. Parton’s brand of country music, however, is driven by capitalist economics. From Dollywood theme park to hotels, restaurants, cake mixes and baking products, to books and tee-shirts, Parton is fundamentally a businesswoman. While her inclusive politics and style of business are more appealing than Vance’s authoritarian capitalist vision, Parton and Vance are mostly in the same ideological camp. The Appalachian people need more than Dollywood theme parks. What they need is more

community and mutual sharing. When I see such memes, I think that people’s views have not changed that much since 2016.

How do my Facebook friends really feel about Appalachia? This question is what I often ponder. While they “used to sympathize” with Appalachian people, one Facebook user commented in 2016, they no longer want anything to do with a region that supports Trump. “My family used to enjoy visiting the Appalachian mountains. We thought they were beautiful,” someone else wrote. “Now I hate Appalachia. Screw Appalachia.” *BIO: Rachel Jennings teaches English at San Antonio College and is active with the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP). Her wish is to see the end of the death penalty in Texas and the U.S. She is also a board member of the Esperanza.*

BIO: Rachel Jennings teaches English at San Antonio College and is active with the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP). She is also a board member of the Esperanza.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This article is an opinion piece and not an endorsement.

To Save a Life, Update on Rolla Alaydi’s Family Trapped in Gaza

By Dianne Monroe

Gaza may be less headline news as I write this story, but the people of Gaza remain in an increasingly desperate situation. That includes my friend Rolla Alaydi’s extended family, trapped in this war of annihilation with no way out.

A lot has happened since March, when I first wrote about my friend Rolla and her determination to get her family (21 people including 13 children) out of Gaza.

Back in January Rolla started a GoFundMe to raise the funds needed to do this: By April the GoFundMe had raised enough money to file paperwork in Egypt to bring the family safely out of Gaza, along with immigration applications for them to enter the U.S. On April 28, Rolla flew to Egypt to begin this paperwork.

Then, on May 6 Israel invaded Rafah, closing the only way out of Gaza and destroying the family’s plans for a safe departure. Since the required paper work to leave Gaza and enter Egypt has been completed, the hope is that they will be among the first allowed to leave whenever the border reopens.

Now, the fundraiser is focused on supporting the family’s needs until they are able to leave. Funds are used to help provide food, clean water, medicine, e-sims to communicate and more. Perhaps most importantly, it offers hope, and the knowledge that people see and care about what happens to them.

So please donate, continue to donate, and share this link widely. Your donations make a big difference to the life of this resilient family.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-rescue-my-family-from-humanitarian-crisis-in>

Since May, Israel’s war of annihilation against the people of Gaza has continued unabated. The family has been forced to move multiple times, trying to avoid Israel’s bombs.

Amazingly, all 21 members of this extended family are still alive. Yet, in Gaza, life hangs by a thread. On May 27, an Israeli air strike triggered a fire in a tent encampment in a “safe zone” near Rafah. Forty-five people were killed and dozens more wounded. Rolla’s sister-in-law and 3 young nephews were among the wounded, receiving burns and other injuries. Fortunately, they were not seriously hurt and will recover.

Through all of this, the family remains remarkably strong and resilient. They do this, in part, by practicing the values of generosity, community, and connection – both to people and the land. These are both Palestinian values and universal human values.

Rolla’s brother, Medhat, living with diabetes, combines what little his family has with others to prepare community meals. Together with his children, he planted a small garden next to their tent to grow fresh vegetables. He has let entire families stay in his

tent when they had to flee their tents to escape Israeli bombing. There’s much more this family does for others, even as their own condition is perilous.

Perhaps in giving to this family, we will receive more than we ever imagined.

Bio: Dianne Monroe is a writer, photographer and experiential educator. Formerly of San Antonio, she now lives in Sonoma County, California.



Rolla’s brother, Medhat, in his garden and her niece, Alma with a tomato.