

OCCUPY THE Round Table

Spring 2012

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

a Revolution
of the Heart



A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOME
Catholic Worker



Why This Issue?

Do you know anyone who has lost a job recently? Or their home? Do you have a son or daughter getting out of college carrying debt they do not know how they will repay?

Are you outraged that representatives of the United States used torture? Does it frighten you that Monsanto has hired XE, formerly known as Blackwater, the largest private army in the world, as its own police force to protect their efforts to market genetically modified seeds around the globe? Are you horrified when you remember watching police stream pepper spray at young students in California? Is it your vision of “what democracy looks like” that in the Defense Authorization Bill this year? Congress and Obama (who signed it), authorized the indefinite detention of US citizens who are deemed to be terrorists. Are you concerned over SOPA and other attempts to control the internet? Are you tired of your country going to war, often to protect its economic interests and oil? Are you worried that the FAA has authorized drones to fly over United States civilian air space? Some cities, New York, LA, and Chicago, have placed orders for them.

Do you throw up your hands in disgust that Congress has shielded its members from prosecution for insider trading or that most of them got elected, being financed by big money and corporations whose bidding they do once elected? Were you disappointed that the United States Supreme Court found corporations to be persons? If your answer to any of these is “yes,” you probably will be, or perhaps already are, interested in Occupy.

We now live in a world where wealth and power are consolidated in the hands of few people. The power of corporations to accumulate wealth and acquire virtual control over governments has grown to shocking levels. While this trend has been growing for some time, people in the United States have been awakened to it in light of the recent global economic collapse. They have become outraged because they are realizing that the economic collapse happened because of greed and injustice. People have decided to claim their space and rights to demand something radically different.

Inspired by the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and the other Occupy groups have grown across the United States and now the world. Our community wanted to look at this movement in light of the Catholic Worker vision. Ellen Rehg initially gives some background to Occupy that will help readers understand Occupy and its roots. Ben Schartman explains the need for autonomous spaces where people choose to live in a more just, authentic and human way. He notes how Occupy offers such a place. Jenny Truax presents the Catholic Worker tenet of nonviolence and shows its importance in bringing about radical change. James Meinert gives a glimpse into Occupy St. Louis and examines how the oppression of the system works its way into opposition movements. Brenna and Eric Cussen Anglada from New Hope Catholic Worker Farm point out the Catholic Worker call to “Occupy the Land.” Lastly, in the Centerfold, Jeff Finnegan provides us with images of the movement. In the regular house articles, Annjie Schiefelbein and Jenny Truax tell us about the changes in their lives at TC House and then Annjie goes on to give us a glimpse of life at Karen House. We also feature some “letters to the editor.”

We are grateful for all of those struggling throughout the world to bring forth the best of life for the human community and are inspired by their courage and generosity. We live in an unjust and violent world. Let us Occupy it with all the love, justice and strength of character that we can muster. ✚

-Teka Childress



Cover: James and Theresa Meinert
Centerfold: Jeff Finnegan

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work. People working on this issue include: Jenny Truax, Teka Childress, Colleen Kelly, James Meinert, Sarah Latham, Carolyn Griffeth, Braden Tobin, Ellen Rehg, and Ben Schartman. Letters to the editor are welcomed.

Turning Protest into Grace : Occupy Everywhere

by Ellen Rehg

"#Occupy Wall Street, September 17th. Bring a Tent." These words appeared on the Adbusters website in July, 2011. They were on a poster depicting a striking image—a dancer doing a graceful arabesque on top of a startled bull. The two stand in stark contrast; the dancer is still and elegant in her pose; the massive bull seems to twist with confusion.

To dance is to elevate movement into art; to create a flowing still-point of balance and beauty. To dance on the bull's back, to ride its working muscles without a stumble, to balance with care and precision, to hold one's position gracefully -this is not to crush the beast through force, but to render its massive power insignificant. It is to rise above it, to present an entirely different model, one of beauty and grace, confounding brute force. Turning protest into grace, [maintaining a flexible position, using creative counter-balancing]—the picture of the dancer and the bull prefigured the complexion of the Occupy movement.

Savvy observers recognize the bull's resemblance to the brassy metal "Charging Bull" statue on Wall Street. They might have an answer to the question posed on the poster in red lettering above the dancer and the bull, "What is our one demand?"

Adbusters is a "global network of culture jammers and creatives working to change the way information flows, the way corporations wield power, and the way meaning is produced in our society," according to its website. The anti-consumerist Canadian not-for-profit publishes a magazine without using any corporate advertising. In the past, Adbusters has initiated campaigns such as "Buy Nothing Day" (in place of Black Friday) and "Digital Detox Week". According to Senior Editor Micah White, Adbusters has been advocating for a citizens' movement against the power of corporations for 20 years.

They were quick to refuse credit for the Occupy movement- "Adbusters gave it the spark, but after that we had almost nothing to do with it," one of the founders acknowl-

edged. "People took the idea and ran with it."

The same was true for the Arab Spring. Although individuals were pinpointed as catalysts for the uprisings, this is somewhat misleading. It was no more one person or group of people who started it than you can find one bee responsible for a field of flowers. (In fact, if anything is responsible for initiating the global uprisings, it is the destructive forces of global capitalism.)

When Mohamed Bouazizi, tired of being hassled over a permit for his fruit stand, stood in the middle of a Tunisian street and shouted, "How do you expect me to make a living!" and then doused himself with gasoline and lit a match—he was shouting the frustration of millions if not billions of people. Likewise, in Egypt, when 25 year old Asmaa Mahfouz made a video of herself and posted it on YouTube, she was the face of the courage and conscience of millions of Egyptians. In the video she urges people to join her in Tahrir Square, on January 25, in concert with a number of opposition groups planning a protest. Departing from the usual practice of maintaining anonymity, Asmaa spoke boldly into the camera, showing her face. The video was posted on blogs and websites, and forwarded through mobile phones, and credited with inspiring many to flood into Tahrir Square.

In part, these individuals stand out because there are so few who do. The uprisings occurred as communities of protest formed in public spaces and cre-

ated safe places to build relationships. The space to build relationships creates the possibility of social change, as people build enough trust among each other to share and act on their radical ideas. In Cairo, Sharif Abdel Kouddous, senior producer of "Democracy Now!" captured a sense of the solidarity in his report:

"There really is an unbelievable feeling of community now, of people coming together. I've never seen Egypt this way. People are picking up trash in Tahrir Square. People are handing out food. People are helping each other. People are



The invitation from Adbusters—a reader-supported, advertising-free magazine devoted to challenging consumerism.



Ellen Rehg is studying microbiology toward a nursing degree and is enjoying learning something so different.

sleeping in the middle of Tahrir Square and setting up tents in the middle of the square. It is a scene that is very emotional. It's something that no one thought could come together. It's largely leaderless. I mean, no one—there's no one organizing group. This is a popular uprising across all segments of society."

Along with the rest of the world, the editors and writers at Adbusters watched the hundreds of thousands of students and other Egyptians camping out in Tahrir Square in Cairo, demanding an end to the Mubarak regime. They were struck by the symbolism and the form which the protests took. The Egyptians' democracy movement took over a public setting that had symbolic importance. "Tahrir", in English means "liberation". Tahrir Square acquired its name after the Egyptian Revolution of 1919 which ended British rule in Egypt, and was the traditional site for major protests against economic and political repression. They also thought that the idea of focusing on one demand and repeating it—that Mubarek must go—was key to Mubarek's resignation on February 11.

As the winter came to an end and spring began, the democratic uprisings began to spread across the Mediterranean. After Tunisia and Egypt, came Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, and others. In each country, the movements followed their own trajectories; not all as successful. In Syria, the uprisings continue; in Yemen, it took nine months to oust their ruler; in the small country of Bahrain the U.S. helped to quash democracy movements because of the country's strategic value.

In May, Spain and Greece joined the list with move-



"Asmaa Mahfouz, one of the heroes of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. In October 2011, she visited Occupy Wall Street in a show of support saying, '...We have to keep going all over the world, because another world is possible for all of us.' Art by Badut Jahat

ments of "Indignant" citizens, dubbed by the Spanish media as "Indignados". Both countries suffered from economic meltdowns, high unemployment, government austerity measures that hurt the poor and middle class, as well as other troubles caused in large part by the same kind of risky financial schemes as those responsible for the 2008 economic meltdown in the U.S. For example, Spain suffers from a 21% unemploy-

ment rate, among the highest in Europe. For the young it is even higher - as much as 43%. One out of every two people

of working age under 25 is unemployed. Spanish youth could indeed echo the cry of the Tunisian street vendor: "How do you expect me to make a living?"

Global influences ping-ponged from one resistance movement to another, in a beautiful 'backatcha' to capitalist globalization. Opposition groups in Egypt had prepared by learning from the nonviolent, student-led Serbian uprising of 2000; and from the Palestinian struggle. In turn, North Americans looked to Egypt, and also to Spain for inspiration.

In early May, Spanish activists organized an online group known as "Democracia Real Ya!" (Real Democracy Now) and called for marches throughout the major cities in Spain. The protests took place on May 15, with 50,000 people gathering in Madrid alone, and many others throughout the nation. On the following day, inspired by their Egyptian peers, a number of Spanish citizens set up tents in the Plaza del Sol in Madrid, determined to remain there until the election on May 22. When police forcefully removed them in the early morning hours of the 17th, the word got out through Twitter, Facebook and other social media. In response, more than 12,000 people flocked to the Plaza del Sol. Around 200 of them held an assembly to decide whether and how to organize the occupation of the Plaza. This began the "15-M" movement in Spain, which continued in many different forms throughout the rest of the year. Also known as the "acampadas" – a word that literally means "camp-outs" – North American activists took note of their practices. The Spanish movement used public assemblies and consensus decision making as a way to embody the democratic practices which they were calling for. The very term for the American movement, 'occupy' may have come from the Spanish and Catalan word, "okupar" used to describe their decision to camp out in the public squares across Spain.

One writer for Adbusters described the movement: *"...The decisions that affect everyone go through the assembly at the end of the day... They are intense debates, carried out with respect...Swearing was forbidden. Drinking was counseled against, drugs rejected, though the matter is under debate...Nonviolence is a basic principle assumed by all, tested when the authorities have grown tired of being overridden and have taken to dishing out beatings."* -<http://www.adbusters.org/magazine/97/manuel-castells.html>

It was only a matter of time before the global movement for democracy hit North American shores. After all, the same or similar conditions that prompted the other uprisings also exist in the United States. We may not have a political dictator, like Mubarek in Egypt. But we have a kind of corporate dictatorship, perhaps all the more insidious since it masquerades as a democracy. Basic statistics provide the evidence of the American wealthy class increasing its wealth at the expense of everyone else, in the past fifty years or so. They tell the story of a corporate coup that has taken place in the past thirty to forty years:

The latter part of the 20th century was the most economically prosperous period in US history, with the economic growth rate rising steadily 118 months by the end of 2000.

However, the gap between the rich and poor widened and the living standards of the laborers went from bad to worse.

Pressing issues such as poverty, hunger and homelessness proved difficult to solve.

The gap between the rich and poor in the United States grew at the same pace as the economic growth. Statistics show that the richest 1 percent of the US citizens own 40 percent of the total property of the country, while 80 percent of US citizens own just 16 percent.

Since the 1990s, 40 percent of the increased wealth went into the pockets of the rich minority, while only 1 percent went to the poor majority.

From 1977 to 1999, the after-tax income of the richest 20 percent of American families increased by 43 percent, while that of the poorest 20 percent decreased 9 percent, allowing for inflation. The actual income of those living on the lowest salaries was even less than 30 years ago. <http://academic.udayton.edu/race/06hrights/geo-regions/northamerica/china03.htm>

These statistics don't tell how this transfer of wealth happened, but the story is not hard to unearth. Bill Moyers, in "How Wall Street Occupied America" describes a counter-attack by the rich beginning in the 1970s. He notes that, while in 1971, only 175 corporations had registered lobbyists in Washington D.C., the number increased to 2,500 by 1982. From fewer than 300 corporate PACs in 1976, the number increased to more than 1,200 by the mid-80s.

Also at that time, in what would become a conservative attempt to undo much of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, the process of government deregulation began, and continued throughout the '80s up to the present day. The Glass-Steagall Act is an example of a regulation that emerged from the Great Depression and was repealed in 1999. The Act prevented commercial banks from investing their assets in the stock market; exactly the activity which drove the 2008 economic crisis in the U.S.

The "Levin-Coburn Report", a 635 page document issued by the House of Representatives to analyze the crisis, determined that "the crisis was not a natural disaster, but the result of high risk, complex financial products; undisclosed conflicts of interest; and the failure of regulators, the credit rating agencies, and the market itself to rein in the excesses of Wall Street." ("Senate Financial Crisis Report, 2011" (PDF).)

Hence on July 13, Adbusters posted a message, saying, *Alright you 90,000 redeemers, rebels and radicals out there, a worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics is underway right now that bodes well for the future. The spirit of this fresh tactic, a fusion of Tahrir with the acampadas of Spain, is captured in this quote:*

"The antiglobalization movement was the first step on

the road. Back then our model was to attack the system like a pack of wolves. There was an alpha male, a wolf who led the pack, and those who followed behind. Now the model has evolved. Today we are one big swarm of people." (quote is from Raimundo Viejo, Spanish political theorist active in the European movements)

This is when the grace kicked in. Seemingly effortlessly, the movement came together without any hierarchical direction. People who wandered on to the organizing scene ended up playing key roles. Random tweets or other online messages and photos moved their authors into disseminators of

information. People from various activists' groups joined in and brought their unique abilities to the mix. Different styles of protest merged into a powerful movement. Internet 'hacktivists' added their talents to the on-ground organizers' efforts.

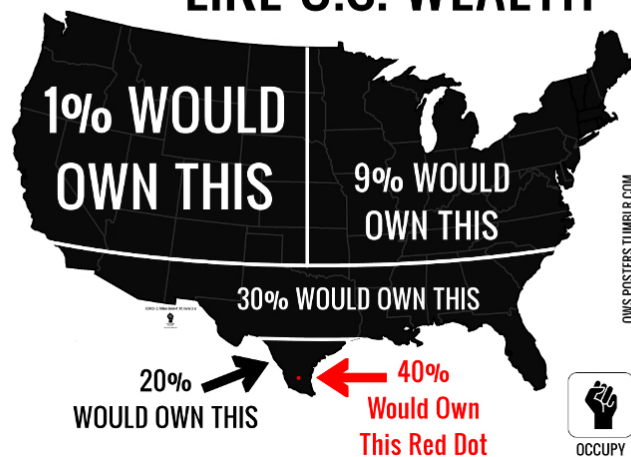
On August 2, organizers in New York, in particular the New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts, and others, gathered around the Charging Bull statue near Wall Street, to begin to plan for the September 17 protest.

Many there were artists and media makers, not the usual protest crowd. But when David Graeber, an anthropologist and anarchist teaching at the University of London, walked up to join the throng, he was disappointed in what he saw. There were large numbers of police on horses, scooters, and on foot, but only about 120 protesters. The protesters were holding a rally - giving speeches, and preparing to march. He had expected the group to adopt the 'horizontal' Assembly process rather than the top-down model of rallies and marches. He began tapping people on the shoulder, taking the messages on their tee shirts as a clue to their political leanings; asking them if they wanted to join him in forming an assembly over in the corner of the park. They ended up forming a circle of about 60 to 70 people, as everyone gradually defected from the rally. Two days later, Graeber spoke the consciousness of the crowd and came up with the slogan, "We are the 99%."

From then on, the group stayed with the Assembly process to make decisions, and a synergy of people brought about the Occupation. On September 17, 2,000 people showed up in Zuchotti Park, with about 100 staying the night.

Over the weeks, despite very little mainstream media coverage, but lots of streaming coverage online, more and more people joined in. As they gathered, they listened to each others' stories: students with oppressive amounts of college

IF U.S. LAND WERE DIVIDED LIKE U.S. WEALTH



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debt, Vietnam and Iraq war vets, Wall Street investors who couldn't believe some of the practices they saw happening, nurses, pilots, construction workers, law students, the homeless, the unemployed, the underemployed.

The signs told the stories too: "Lost my job, found an Occupation." "Betrayed." "Human Needs, not Corporate Greed." "Compassion is a Radical Act." "Second time I fought for my country; First time I've known my enemy."

And most significantly: "This is what Democracy Looks Like." Assemblies were held everyday to make decisions through consensus. Because the city refused to allow microphones to amplify voices, people developed the human mic or 'mic check' system. The listening crowd repeated a speaker's words in broken up phrases so that everyone could hear.

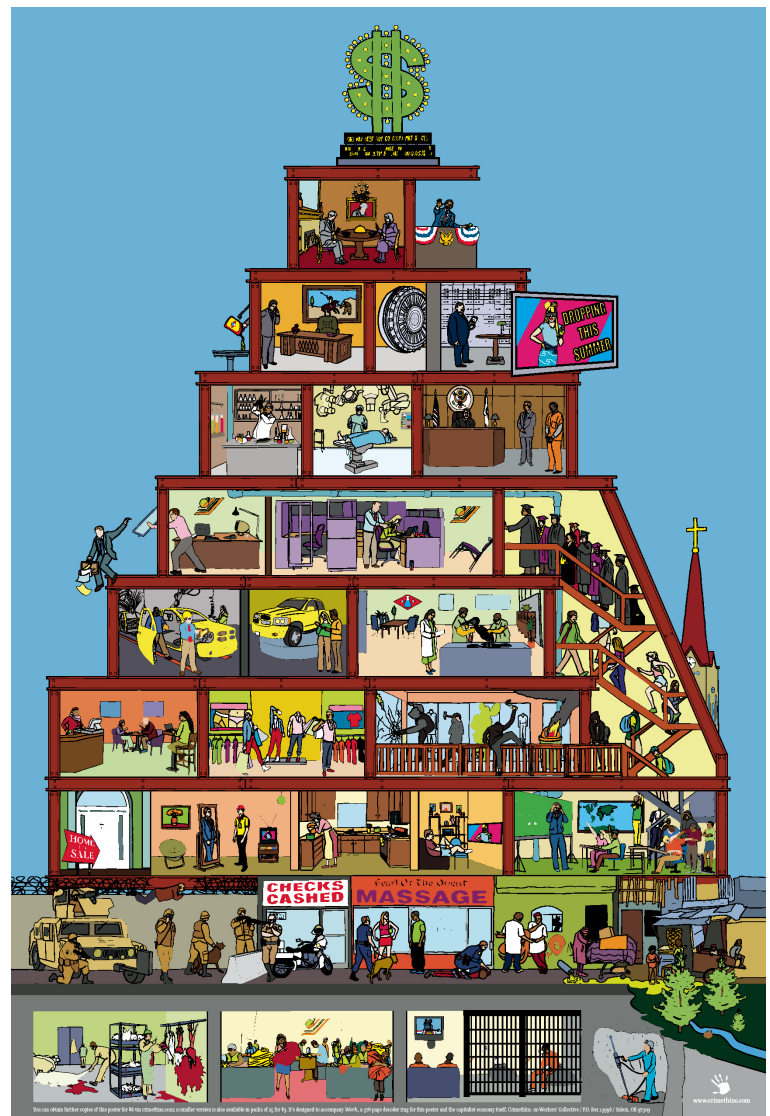
The Occupy Wall Street contained, among other things, a catalogued lending library of 5,554 books, areas which distributed donated food and clothing, a communications area powered by generators. It had a newspaper, The "Occupied Wall Street Journal," a drum line that pounded rhythms throughout the day, and more than 80 working groups, sanitation being one of them.

The movement sponsored numerous actions, such as Bank Transfer Day.

Occupy spread to over 100 cities in the United States, as well as to groups, such as OccupyPolice, OccupyMarines, etc. The physical occupation of Zuchotti Park ended when the police forcibly removed tents and people from the park in early November. But the movement is just beginning.

Adbusters put out a call for 50,000 occupiers to set up camp in Chicago during this year's planned NATO/G8 summit in May. Many other groups are converging there to voice their opposition to NATO/G8 policies and to show what real democracy looks like.

What is our one demand? Occupy Everywhere.



crimethinc.com/tools/posters.html

Why Occupy?

- Because it seems impossible to live a just life in this country.
- Because the planet depends on it.
- Because deep down, you know that the status quo of this country is unsustainable for its citizens, for the people of the world, and for the planet.
- Because little by little, you are losing your civil liberties.
- Because you know how little your voice really matters in choosing the direction of our country, despite the rhetoric of "Decision 2012."
- Because you're tired of relying on credit to stay afloat.
- Because your child's college education will probably cost \$200,000 yet not guarantee a decent salary or health care; but WILL guarantee a life of debt-induced servitude.
- Because you're tired of accepting the way our country exploits everyone else in the world.
- Because THIS IS THE TIME to join others, get involved, build community, create alternatives, express your frustration, and build a real movement for change.

Reclaiming our Spaces

by Ben Schartman

Presidential candidate Obama inspired hope and belief in great numbers of people who had been apathetic and hopeless about the political process. He has not sustained this hope. For some people his presidency has destroyed the possibility that this hope will ever rise again.

One of my friends had little hope in Obama to begin with and spoke of the Presidency of America as a symbolic/mid-level managerial position in a world actually ruled by wealth and corporations. For me, it has become impossible to deny this any further with the Supreme Court's decision to allow unlimited campaign contributions. The political process now appears to me as a great charade or Spectacle¹ that serves the purpose of fooling people into believing that their government is democratic and will respond to them, if only they follow the proper procedure and exert enough effort. The political process thus focuses a great amount of the energy of people desiring a better world into the dynamics of a flawed and false system.

For me, interest in autonomous movements and spaces begins after an acknowledgment of the fundamental brokenness of our political system. My hope is that creation of autonomous zones will become a fundamental and widespread new model of struggling for a more just society. My hope is that autonomous spaces will grow up in this world as it is, blossoming in particular locations as new forms of organization and culture that entirely reject the logic and right of the state and capitalism to create the rules for human life. In place of the controlling power of these behemoth institutions, legitimate authority will rest in the consensus based decision processes of communities of people.

The Occupy movement has the potential to be such a movement. Actions taking place from many of the different Occupys across the country demonstrate this rejection of the logic of state and capitalism. Furthermore,

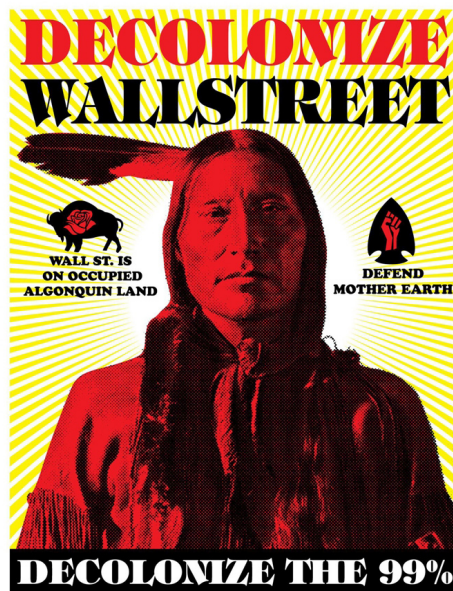
many of the cultural practices taking place within Occupy demonstrate an alternative way of living together based upon consensus and sharing. This article will attempt to put the Occupy movement within the context of the struggle for autonomous spaces.

An autonomous zone is described in wikipedia as "an area of a country that has a degree of autonomy, or freedom from an external authority." Such places have existed throughout the whole course of human history. Before the centralization of power in empires and states they would have been the rule and not the exception. In the Middle Ages of the European World, autonomous zones would have looked like communities of people far enough away

from the centers of the power of feudal lords and church officials to organize their own lives together. Though, even in this time, groups that strove for autonomy were often in danger of violence and repression. In his book, Against His-story Against Leviathan Fredy Perlman gives a fascinating account of many of these communities: included in his examples of free, self-ruling groups of people were the Taborites and other groups such as the Bogomils, Brethren of the Free Spirit and Waldensians. These communities of people were deemed "heretics" and identified for destruction by the Church, but seen by Fredy Perlman of being guilty only of the crime of attempting to live life in a self-determined manner. What comes across in this book is a history seen from the perspective of small autonomous communities of people, instead of a history seen from

the perspective of the large impersonal institutional entities of empires, states and the Church.

The existence of autonomous communities depends on those communities having access to what they need in order to support themselves. For this reason, one of the most significant movements of history within the European Middle Ages was the enclosure process starting as early as 1285 and continuing until all the land that had previously been held in common for communities had been stolen



"occupyposters.tumblr.com"



Ben Schartman has spent much of the last weeks working on a house with no roof, and has therefore struggled to answer the question: are you working outside or inside?

and turned into private property. We are still reeling from this violent act, for it took the ability to be self-sustaining from thousands of people and all of their millions of descendants. These people were forced into a dependency on those who had stolen their lands and were then in the process of creating capitalism.

In our own land, called America (after the European explorer Amerigo Vespucci) a similar thing took place. This continent was populated with a vast array of different communities or tribes of people, which were autonomous and self-determining, before the European settlers arrived and through genocide² and theft reduced these communities to fractions of their former number and vitality. It is this history and this truth that caused many



photographer unknown

indigenous activists to call for decolonization within the Occupy movement instead of occupation. Foundational in the history of this country, and in the European birth of Capitalism, is the theft by those with power of common property that allowed communities to have self-dependence and autonomy.

Though the history of these two events is similar in some ways, it was the victims of this European enclosure or their descendants who enacted this same violence upon the native peoples of this continent. Yet, among those arriving from the West, some became the victims of the racist, patriarchal and classist organization of power brought with this great European re-settlement along with others who were re-settled against their will. Some of these people (including 'white' indentured servants and African slaves) escaped from this existence and joined together with Amer-Indians in communities of mutual support, living together outside the reach of the European settlers power structure. These communities are referred to by historians as maroon communities. These communities are but one example in a great number of attempts made by people to restore justice to their lives and bring back to life the human community that was torn apart by land-enclosure, colonialism and genocide. This is the history which the struggle for autonomous zones

inherits and continues.

In the preceding paragraphs I have tried to give a brief history of some of the forces that acted towards the destruction of autonomous communities; the rest of this essay will focus on a few of the more recent attempts to recreate autonomous communities and autonomous spaces. The modern European history of autonomous movements is described with clarity by Georgy Katsiaficas in his book *The Subversion of Politics*. This book describes the vital importance that the women's liberation movement plays in its contribution to the creation of the wider European autonomous movements. In the 1970's, in both Italy and Germany, social centers were created by women and for women only. In these spaces, women

were able to come together and overcome the isolation of their lives and experience a world in which they could relate to other persons as comrades and equals (absent the constricting and corrupting influence of patriarchal culture). Together these women created "a vibrant set of autonomous women's institutions: women's bars, newspapers, magazines, presses, bookstores, film festivals, and rock bands." (71)

These autonomous institutions "were places where the old organizational forms were questioned and nonhierarchical and decentralized action points were created." (71) These non-hierarchical and decentralized forms spread from these women's centers out into other autonomous movements. In fact, it was the women's movement reclaiming of power from patriarchal norms that made the existence of truly autonomous spaces possible. The history described above is the history of the accumulation of power through domination. In societies that are founded upon domination, the domination of one group by another (women by men) is acceptable and legitimized. The destruction of this dynamic by women, at least within the women's only spaces, created areas of radical equality from which new ways of being together and sharing power could emerge. These new ways of sharing power based on equality as opposed to domination are the very heart of autonomous spaces.

Autonomous zones are spaces that reject the power dynamics of the society that contains them and as such they can be places of freedom from social roles, which act both to constrict the freedom of individuals and at the same time uphold the power dynamics of an unjust society. Katsiaficas describes the exhilaration and power that participation in autonomous spaces can have in a brief personal account of his participation in the occupation of a nuclear-waste facility in Gorleben, Germany.

"A city was built from the already felled trees—a wonderfully diverse collection of houses—and dubbed the Free Republic of Wendland (a name taken from the region's traditional title). Local farmers... provided the resident-activists with the food and materials to build

their 'republic.' Passports were issued bearing the name of the new republic, imaginative illegal underground radio shows were broadcast, and newspapers were printed and distributed throughout the country. Speaking personally, Gorleben was one of the few places I felt at home in German public life... No one approached me as a Turk, nor reproached me for being American. Indeed, national identities were temporarily suspended since we were all citizens of the Free Republic of Wendland and owed allegiance to no government. We became human beings in some essential meaning of the term, sharing food and living outside the system of monetary exchange. An erotic dimension was created that simply could not be found in normal interaction." (84)

This passage highlights fundamental aspects of autonomous zones: claiming autonomy from traditional structures of power (the nation-state), creation of autonomous institutions of press and media, escape from traditional social roles/identities, re-creation of the commons (in shared food and living outside system of monetary exchange). This passage gives a taste of the excitement that we might all feel if we found a way to shed our identity as citizens of the American Empire and create together identities founded in autonomous resistance communities. How much more exciting to belong to the Free Republic of Wendland...

The uprising in Oaxaca Mexico in 2006 presents another example of the creation of autonomous space that contests the authority of the traditional power structure.³ This uprising began with 22,000 teachers going out on strike and occupying the capital city Oaxaca; their demands were that the children be better taken care of, have shoes and food. About one month later, on June 14th, instead of negotiating with the teacher's union, the government sent in federal police. There was a massive response of support from the people of Oaxaca that not only overwhelmed the police and caused them to retreat but fundamentally changed the situation. Before this point, the teachers were engaging in an aggressive form of political negotiating with the government; after this point, the teachers and citizen's of Oaxaca took over control of their city from the State government and Oaxaca operated as an autonomous zone.

Following this event the teachers' union came together with over 300 other Oaxacan organizations to create the APPO, Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca. Through a consensus process based upon indigenous governance practices this group of people came up with one non-negotiable demand. This was the removal of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, the man who had sent the police to attack the teachers, of his control over them as the governor of the State of Oaxaca.

To demonstrate their rejection of the political order, groups of people took over almost every government building in Oaxaca. To paraphrase the words of Luis Hernandez Navarro, 'What had basically been a teachers' struggle became a huge popular movement which demonstrates ingovernability. By taking responsibility for

public order and occupying public buildings, the city of Oaxaca is transformed into a new form of popular organization that offers an alternative to the existing institutions and the established form of government.'

For Beatriz Gutierrez Luis the police attack on the teachers was the breaking point of the "long history of injustices that we have suffered especially as indigenous people. The lack of water, the pollution of all our natural resources, our lack of food security. We've been marginalized, excluded and subjected to poverty, discrimination and severe racism." On June 14th, the people of Oaxaca came together to reject this whole history of oppression, take back their power and establish a system for making communal decisions that was based upon participation and consensus.

The people of Oaxaca were not able to permanently secede from the unjust system of power that they live under; however, they were able to hold Oaxaca as an autonomous space for several months. The struggle to reject unjust forms of government and society subsided in Oaxaca, but it arises in other places.

The Occupy movements are a current manifestation of this movement for the creation of autonomous space. Occupying public spaces and refusing to obey the demands of those in power to leave is the most fundamental example of this. In doing this, Occupy is recreating a commons. This recreation of communally held 'property' allows for the creation of strong and vibrant communities. And by refusing to leave their parks, these communities are demonstrating that legitimate authority does not belong to the State, but to the community of people that inhabits a space. This idea is potentially dangerous to the centralization of power that the State protects; for this idea could easily be carried out of parks in city centers and into spaces all throughout the country. What could arise—what perhaps is arising—is a network of mutually supportive, autonomous communities that collectively reject the legitimacy of state power. These communities would carry forward the struggle for justice and human freedom not within the confines of the State's political system, but instead by seceding from this system altogether and building a new way of life based upon the dismantling of private property, non-toleration of unjust power dynamics, and community-based consensus decision making. We carry a new world in our hearts, one more fantastic, empowering, and just than the current!



1. See Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle

2. This history is told very well in The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic by Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker

3. All of the information in this article about this uprising is drawn from the movie titled: "A Little Bit of so Much Truth," which can be found on Google Videos.

Nonviolence, Catholic Worker Style: Misunderstood, Irrelevant, or Revolutionary?

by Jenny Truax

Let's face it—nonviolence has gotten a bad rap. It has been misunderstood even by those who proclaim to adhere to it, and is often today associated with words like passive and ineffective. The Occupy movement has been practicing nonviolence in its gatherings, and has enlivened many discussions on strategy, tactics, social change, and lifestyle. People are debating—do we support reform of the current system or revolution toward a new system? How should we act towards agents of the state, especially the police? Is nonviolence too misunderstood—too linked with complacency and the status quo—to be useful today? As U.S. citizens, and inheritors of the legacy of exploitation and violence, how can we effectively end violence within our unjust systems, our relationships and ourselves? It's a good time to re-examine the Catholic Worker (CW) vision of nonviolence, its interdependence with CW anarchism and personalism, and to renew our commitment to this most important CW tenet.

Pacifism, Anarchism, and Personalism (Oh my!)

First, let's do some defining. The Catholic Worker takes the stand of the absolutist pacifist, stating in its Aims and Means "we oppose the deliberate taking of human life for any reason, and see every oppression as blasphemy," and "Only through nonviolent action can a personalist revolution come about, one in which one evil will not be replaced simply by another." Pacifists believe that all forms of violence, war, and killing are wrong, seeking a society that is free from oppression. Pacifists often apply nonviolence to different aspects of their lives according to their specific ability, interest, and stage of life. (Think of pacifism as the belief while nonviolence is the method of practice toward that belief.) In this framework, nonviolence involves all aspects of life: our relationships, what we eat, how we get around, where we work, etc. Although commonly confused with, and therefore associated with the word passive, pacifism is anything but; by definition, it requires an active participation in the world that few would deem passive.

Anarchism can be generally defined as the political philosophy which considers "the state" (in our case, the U.S. government) to be unnecessary, and even detrimental towards promoting the common good. Anarchists, regardless of their specific strain, usually advocate stateless societies

based on non-hierarchical, voluntary associations. We also recognize that today, multi-national corporations are just as, if not more, powerful than the state, and so work to challenge and replace these corrupt institutions. The anarchism of the Catholic Worker is a social anarchism (generally emphasizing equality and community) as opposed to individual anarchism (generally emphasizing the individual's autonomy); we stress the importance of people taking personal responsibility for each other, rather than passing the buck to the state. The Catholic Worker's social anarchism can be considered both "Anarcho-pacifist" (heavily influenced by Henry David Thoreau



23 year-old Rachel Corrie's death in 2003 became a powerful symbol of foreign support for the Palestinian people. Working with the International Solidarity Movement, a Palestinian-led group that utilizes nonviolent, direct-action methods of resistance to confront illegal Israeli occupation, she was run over by an Israeli bulldozer while trying to prevent it from demolishing a Palestinian physician's home.

and Leo Tolstoy) and "Christian anarchist" (see JesusRadicals.com for a wonderful primer on Christian Anarchism). It also has significant overlap with "Green Anarchism" (see Eric An-glada's amazing 2011 RoundTable article "The Greening of the Catholic Worker").

The new society the Catholic Worker advocates is personalist—one in which the dignity of each person is the primary focus of all structures. We believe that all people are manifestations of God, of utmost importance, and capable of transformation. Many of our principles flow from this idea; we use nonviolent action, seek to live in voluntary poverty, build decentralized structures to organize ourselves, and value manual labor.



Jenny Truax has taken the mantle, once worn by Mark Scheu, of Catholic Worker theoretician.

Now, let's delve more into the specific Catholic Worker flavor of nonviolence. These six principles of nonviolence, developed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are helpful in fleshing out how our nonviolence looks. The quotations are from his book, Stride Toward Freedom.¹

1. Nonviolence is the way of the strong; not for the cowardly, the weak, the passive, the apathetic or the fearful. "Nonviolent resistance...is not passive non-resistance to evil; it is active nonviolent resistance to evil."

Our society (not surprisingly) associates nonviolence with acquiescence to power, the police, and the military; but authentic nonviolence is inherently confrontational and creatively challenges oppression. Courageous examples of this nonviolent action abound: the nonviolent resisters of the Civil Rights Movement, International Solidarity Movement volunteers blocking home demolitions in Palestine with their bodies, SoulForce members challenging religious discrimination of LGBTQs with Equality Rides, and Ploughshares activists confronting the proliferation of U.S. nuclear weapons and accepting years in prison as a consequence.

2. The goal of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. "Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent but to win friendship and understanding...The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness."

This idea fits in well with the Catholic Worker ideal of personalism. We are more than our worst sin—the rapist, the police officer beating someone, the war profiteer, the teenage hoodlum, the mindless consumer choosing convenience over basic human rights—and capable of redemption. By using nonviolent action, we assume the best of people, even our "enemies," and seek to engage in positive conflict. One of the prayers at the 2010 Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat intoned, "We do not act this way because we are sure we are right. We act this way because we are compelled by love."

Finding reconciliation and redemption within our own movements can feel as difficult as ending U.S. imperialism. At times, some of today's actions can feel wooden or directed solely toward arrest, leaving some participants feeling disengaged or disempowered. The challenge is to find inclusive, effective (although efficacy is often debated), and meaningful actions that bring diverse groups together using shared decision making.

3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat evil, not people. Nonviolence is directed "against forces of evil rather than against persons who happen to be doing the evil. It is evil that the nonviolent resister seeks to defeat, not the persons victimized by evil." King recognizes that oppressors are also themselves victims of the evil they perpetuate.

Our attitudes and disposition towards the fist of the state, especially the military and the police, come into play here. These two groups are responsible for enforcing the will of the U.S. government, and the corporations that control it. As pacifists — people committed to reducing violence and killing — we oppose these two institutions and their basis in coercion and violence. At the same time, as personalists, we believe that the people participating in these institutions are just as deserving of love and mercy, just as blessed and significant, as we are.

WAR DRESSED UP FOR CAPITALISM



occupyposters.tumblr.com

The tension between these two positions is tricky. How do we "Support our Troops" as individual manifestations of God while actively challenging the oppressive institutions they serve? How do we respond to police brutality? How do we train and utilize peacekeepers in our nonviolent demonstrations to do more than simply enforce police directives?

One well-loved method of nonviolent civil disobedience is to break the law that one opposes. For example, Voices in the Wilderness openly violated the U.S.-led sanctions on Iraq, bringing humanitarian aid to Iraq during the 1990s. Today, how do we challenge injustice that spans the globe through enormous multi-national corporations like Monsanto or Shell Oil? What about Wall Street? Empire is pervasive, touching every part our lives, which makes creative resistance to evil more challenging.

4. Nonviolence includes a willingness to endure suffering without retaliation. This is a big one. "The nonviolent resister is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it...Unearned suffering is redemptive... [It has] tremendous educational and transforming possibilities." King encouraged activists to paraphrase Gandhi:

"We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws. Do to us what you will and we will still love you....But we will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And in winning our freedom we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process."

People committed to nonviolence try to not retaliate out of anger when attacked, physically and verbally. In the personal realm, they try to avoid reflexively reacting from anger. In the political realm, they do not retaliate. This often has unintended positive consequences — the 2011 pepper spraying at University of California contributed vast credibility to the Occupy movement, winning over far more supporters than fighting back might have. And it exposed the extreme violence of the system in a way it never would have had the students begun to retaliate.

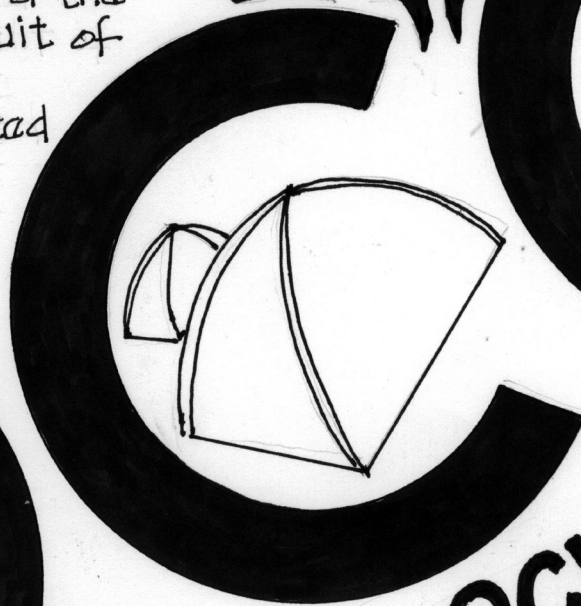
Committing to nonviolence means working against oppression, taking care not to judge how targeted groups react to their

But the work [occupy] is
 doing - shining a spotlight
 on basic issues of
 justice and holding up the "least
 of these" - echoes the
 Gospels message of
 good news to the poor
 and setting the
 oppressed free.

• Jim Roca
 Sojourners

There has
 been a theft
 by the 1% of our
 democratic ability to
 shape and form the
 society in which we live
 and our society is
 steered toward the
 destructive pursuit of
 consumption,
 profit and greed
 at the expense
 of all else.

• Portland GA



#OCW

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OCCUPY TOGETHER

This is
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it's a process!
• A-

"We are planning
to dramatize
the issue to
the point that poor
people in this
nation will
have to be seen
and will not
be invisible."
• martin Luther King
"poor peoples campaign"



I bailed out
Wall Street
and all I've got
left is this box
LIVE IN

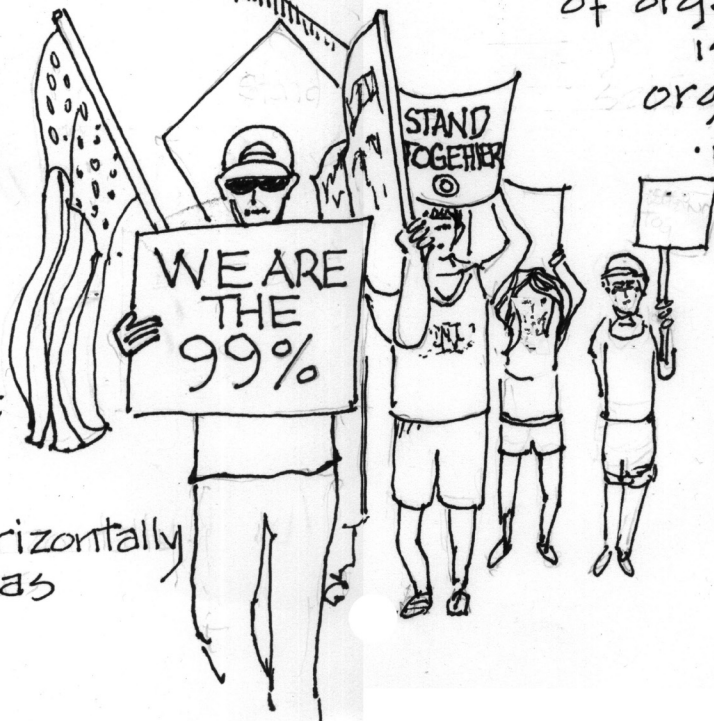
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The best kind
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is self-
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• peter maurin

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• losangeles GA.net



oppression and suffering. Historically, it's a common practice for white people of privilege to critique people of color, women and indigenous groups whose actions make us "uncomfortable"; we have a deeply held desire to be ingratiated to people in power. We're often accepting of the state-sponsored violence of the Army and the drone compared to the stone-throwing mob; the perpetrator of domestic violence is often given more leniency and empathy than his abused wife who fights back.

Groups who choose nonviolence must decide how to work with coalitions and groups that use a diversity of tactics, a hotly-contested idea these days, especially within the Occupy movement. Folks are debating whether, and how, groups with different takes on violence and nonviolence can work together. Can a pacifist community work with the Black Bloc (groups of people wearing black with faces covered who use tactics that might include breaking the law, destroying property, or fighting with the police to achieve the aims of the protest)? Can we use personalism, finding the common values between groups working for justice while authentically expressing our own values of nonviolence?

When we discuss diversity of tactics, it's also important to acknowledge that not everyone enjoys the same amount of privilege, and that oppressed groups are more at risk from police reprisals, having already been targets of repression, police violence, and hate crimes. So we need to be aware of the power dynamics within our groups—who is making the decisions, and who stands to suffer or risk the most. Focused, nonviolent actions can sometimes minimize risk to oppressed groups and keep focus on the intended message in a way that combinations of violent and nonviolent actions cannot.

As pacifists who believe in working against oppression, we believe we cannot build a society free from violence by using violent means, that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Audre Lorde). Violent confrontation strategies often lead to a focus on victory and vengeance, simply replacing one injustice with another. Catholic Workers seek not to mimic or outdo state violence, but to undermine, challenge and

avoid coercing others into believing likewise, and build relationships with other groups who believe in radically different tactics? We need to tread intentionally, communicating honestly with each other, preferentially supporting targets of oppression and living our values as authentically as possible.

5. Nonviolence avoids both external physical violence and internal violence of spirit. It practices agape/love in action. "The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot the opponent; [s]he also refuses to hate the opponent. At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love." King calls us to the highest possible, unconditional, all-encompassing love; he believed that God works through us when we use the weapon of nonviolent love.

Practicing nonviolent action encompasses more than one's behavior at a particular protest, it means rooting out violence within ourselves and our relationships, examining power dynamics, committing to the good of the other, and acting with humility. "This humility...is rooted in an awareness of one's need to trust in God, in each other, and in the possibility for good, and to approach every thought, word and deed with a reverence for life," says Amy Nee from the White Rose CW.

Jerica, her fellow community member, explains further. "It is helpful to situate nonviolence in the context of attempting, however slowly, to peel away our hearts and minds from the culture of violence we live in. Nonviolence is often defined in relationship to direct action... but in my mind, it is also about changing the culture of our communities, [which have] been developed only following generations and generations of exploitation and violence..."

6. Nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. "The believer in nonviolence has deep faith in the future...and knows that in the struggle for justice [we have] cosmic companionship."

We Catholic Workers know and believe that our efforts are both pitifully small and also monumentally important. "We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as well as our friend." (Dorothy Day)

The Catholic Worker Revolution

"At the heart of Gandhi's approach to social change is his understanding that the building blocks of a nonviolent society are the vibrant, productive, nonviolent lives of individual women and men. Effective nonviolent political action does not spring from a vacuum; it grows out of daily living grounded in personal and communal spiritual practice, and in constructive service to one's immediate and surrounding communities. Nonviolence on the political stage is only as powerful as the personal and community-based nonviolence of those who engage in it." (Chris Moore-Backman)

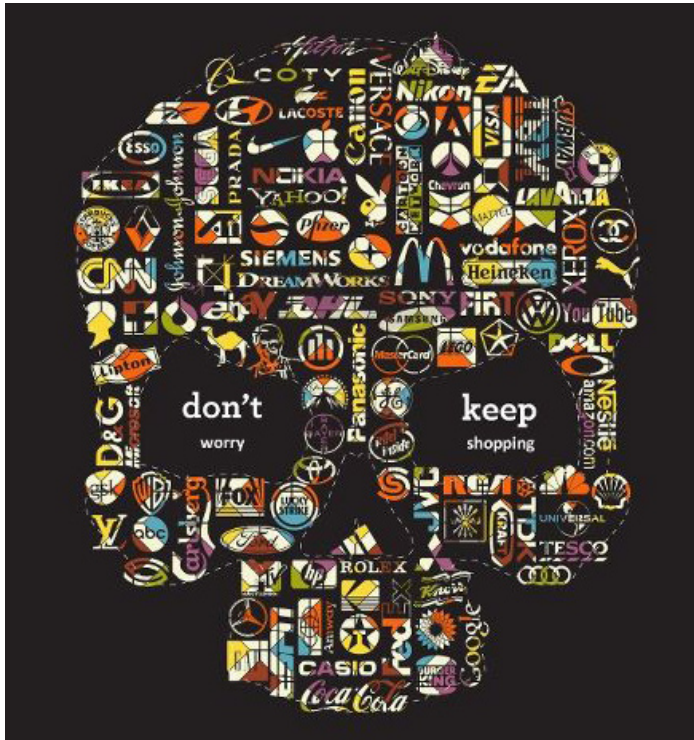
The Catholic Worker's application of nonviolence can be found along a huge spectrum of venues. Catholic Workers enthusiastically participate in traditional forms of nonviolent civil disobedience. The 2011 National CW Gathering included a demonstration and arrest-action at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada, which operates drones, while that year's Midwest



Photo – Melissa Robertson

rism and not just give it another form." (Michael Nagler)

Balancing these beliefs is a tricky business. How do we express our foundational belief in non-retaliation and sacrifice,



occupyposters.tumblr.com

CW Resistance Retreat challenged the construction of a nuclear weapons plant in Kansas City. Catholic Workers have also expanded the theatre for exploring nonviolent action:

"I see the actions I participate in, and later get arrested because of, as a way I communicate nonviolence. But I also see the kale and tomatoes we grow in our backyard and the way we spend our money (decided in a cooperative way) as a tangible form of nonviolence. And I claim very deeply that the delegation I went on to Afghanistan, where I greeted and shared meals with people my culture deems as "terrorists," is an extension of my commit-

ment to nonviolence." Kathy Kelly further suggests that pacifist communities can "foster meaningful links with people who bear the brunt of war and injustice in other parts of the world ...educate on the contradictions inherent in U.S. exceptionalism and, as much as possible, reject the presumed comforts and conveniences that often persuade people to collaborate with war profiteers." Both in our public witnesses, and in our not-so public projects, Catholic Worker pacifists seek to reduce violence and challenge oppressive structures.

Promoting personalism, taking personal responsibility for each other, and infusing our lives with nonviolent action – our Catholic Worker revolution, as usual, is described well by Dorothy Day: "The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us? When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our [sisters and] brothers with that burning love, that passion, which led to the Cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.'"

1. "What Martin Luther King Jr. Can Teach Us about Nonviolence" – by John Dear SJ in NCR Online
2. Thanks to Kathy Kelly, Jerica Arents, Amy Nee, Colleen Kelly, James Meinert and Ben Schartman for contributing vital ideas to this article.
3. Additional Reading and Resources:
 - beyondintractability.org, trainingforchange.org, wagingnonviolence.org
 - Mahatma Gandhi and His Myths: Civil Disobedience, Nonviolence, and Satyagraha in the Real World by Mark Shepard (available for online: markshep.com/peace/Myths.html)
 - A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker by Patrick G. Coy
 - Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays – Ed. Runkel, Thorn, Mountin

THE INCREASINGLY FASCIST UNITED STATES

Born in relative freedom, most of us have a hard time even considering that it is possible for us to become "unfree". No doubt about it, the U.S. is creeping towards becoming a more closed society, demonstrating the urgent need for us to create autonomous spaces. Watch for these markers—often unnoticed but nevertheless insidious—of a country becoming more closed and less free:

- Maintaining a state of perpetual war
- Seeking to purify the country of foreign influences deemed to be unfavorable
- Doctrine superseding reason, science always being suspect
- Using organized violence (military and police) to suppress opposition and undesirable elements of society
- Controlling media through misinformation, threats of information shut downs
- Governing with the instruments of fear, curtailing civil liberties, increasing surveillance of citizens
- Creating new definitions of people (like "terrorist") that do not deserve basic human rights
- Utilizing special prisons, private paramilitary groups that are also outside of U.S. law

In the Shell of the Old, not a City on a Hill

by James Meinert

The phrase “a city on a hill” is traced back to Jesus of Nazareth as he tells his disciples, “A city on a hill cannot be hidden,” and it’s a phrase that has captured the American imagination. While his original meaning could be debated, this phrase has taken on a meaning in the American vernacular that speaks to our striving for perfection. Many of the Puritans coming to the “new continent” wanted to start new cities, perfect cities, that would shine like a city on a hill, lighting the way for all other (less than perfect) people to follow. Somehow this idea has gotten deep into the American psyche—that something new, whether a project, or movement, or protest must be nearing perfection and thus able to light the way for others; anything less is not really good enough or worth doing.

For those who have gotten close enough to the Occupy movements to encounter some of the legitimate criticisms (not the ones like “they have no message” or “they are a bunch of anarchists”), or have gotten close enough to the Catholic Worker (CW) to see some of the same critiques, it will come as no surprise that both of these movements have many of the same complex issues that exist in society at large. Both Occupy and the CW have been rightly critiqued for having patterns of racism, anti-semitism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism, characterized by disdain and distrust of the working class and homeless by the middle and upper/owning class. These manifestations of oppression in our society are a part of—and exist to actively support—capitalism. Both Occupy and the CW (in my opinion) are anti-capitalism movements. So the question then exists, why do these isms, these manifestations of oppression, exist in movements trying to eliminate them and work for a world based on love, respect, justice, creativity, and cooperation.

Peter Maurin, visionary and co-founder of the CW, liked to borrow a phrase from the Wobblies (IWW) when describing the direction of the CW movement as “building a new society in the shell of the old.” The idea here is to organize the society we want to see in the future even as we work to oppose the current way in which society is organized. Anarchists have called

this pre-figuring. I like to call it living into one’s dreams. This is something that has been recognized and embraced within Occupy from early on. Many in the Occupy movement have tried earnestly to do away with hierarchies and to make decisions using consensus. Occupiers have intended to be welcoming and inclusive of people of all backgrounds—no matter race, sex, gender, sexuality, class, etc. As one St. Louis Occupier, Zach, said, “It would be counterproductive to not include people... we’re really trying to be as inclusive as possible.” The new society that is dreamed of doesn’t include the oppressions and confusions of our current society that keep people isolated and separated. However, in spite of these best intentions, anti-Semitic, racist, sexist, classist behaviors still exist both within the CW and within Occupy St. Louis (OSL).

The CW is not unaware of its race and class issues when in many houses the people who make decisions are white and middle class but many of the people who are invited in as guests are part of the global majority (people of color) and working class and poor. Similarly in many Occupy encampments, college educated, white, middle-class, males are likely to be seen trying to lead the way. One occupier stated, “I’m a white, American, male and bring all my blindness and preconceptions to issues... I haven’t seen anything I’d call sexism, but I’ve talked to women and they see it” (Zach). Many others that were interviewed readily offered story after story of racism, classism, and sexism, seeing them as persistent problems in OSL. “There was a lot of talk [in OSL] of the homeless as a problem” (Cathy). “Most of Occupy was a white crowd and some thought it was the racial tension” (Cat). Are we really building a new society if what we are building includes all of these problems?

How oppression sets in

Before answering that question, it is important to understand a little bit about where these oppressions, the various isms, come from, how they get inside of us, and how to start working against them. The majority of the current oppressions we have within our society serve to sustain capitalism. One critical way capitalism leads to oppression is by teaching us



photographer unknown



James Meinert is grateful to the following people from OSL who were interviewed for this article, and while he quoted sparsely from them, their perspective greatly shaped this piece— Apple, Cat, Cathy, Chuck, Desiree, Glenn, and Zach.

that an individual can own private property—as much as he or she wants (greed)—no matter the detriment to a community or the environment, and that if the person’s private property is challenged—by unions, worker take-overs, strikes, etc.—it can be protected using state-approved violence (police or militias) or the threat of violence. To break this down a little, let’s look at how this worked with one form of oppression—racism.

There was probably a time when most people saw differences of skin color and noted them, but didn’t have all of the confused feelings come up such as fear, hatred, anger, defensiveness, or even excitement around people of different skin colors. Currently, however, there exists within most people the not-so-subtle belief that lighter colored skin is better than darker colored skin. This confusion is called racism, and it has been institutionalized in our society. Racism as it exists currently in the United States probably started several hundred years ago. Part of what led up to it was that colonialism was raping and pillaging peoples from around the world and using the people thus impoverished as laborers to increase the wealth of the colonialists. Some of these peoples were of African heritage, Middle Eastern heritage, from Asia or the continent now known as the Americas, and some were even of European heritage. Then, when colonizing the Americas the colonizers wanted massive amounts of slave labor and turned primarily to enslaving the peoples of Africa. When people began rising up against the institution of slavery there were often revolts by both the indentured servants and the enslaved people from Europe and Africa. “To keep people from organizing together against the unjust system they were repressed violently. It is easier to keep uprisings from happening by dividing people first in their minds. So white people, even the poorest, were gradually convinced of their superiority to all people of color. This makes it really difficult for the working class and poor to organize together when there is so much internal resistance. Similarly men have been confused about themselves and women, and people in the middle class have been tricked into believing that their interests lie more with the owning class than with their working class sisters and brothers. Anywhere people would find more strength in organizing together against unjust systems—be it feudalism, capitalism, communism—they are divided and over time confused about each other’s intrinsic dignity and goodness.

We humans come into this world expecting communities of loving people and instead we get societies based on dividing wealth and labor in order to financially benefit a few while a whole bunch of people consequently become traumatized by this injustice. We then get blasted with messages about how it is better to be white, to be male, to be heterosexual, to be rich, etc. I’m sure this confuses most of us and we look to adults to help explain reality to us or at least let us process our confusion, but adults with a good grip on how all of this oppression and confusion work are few and far between. So we’re left to wrestle with it alone and mostly we end up either playing out the same oppressive ways we saw as children in adulthood (hurt people hurt people) or really working against these oppressions but finding that they pop up and get in our way often—white people trying really hard but saying racist things; men trying really hard, but having so much trouble listening to or valuing women’s experiences, etc. This is because the confusion is inside of us, and we pass it on to each other in very subtle, often unintentional ways.

Organizing against oppression

This all leaves us in pretty tricky situations when we are trying to organize against the system of confusion and greed that has people consolidating wealth and using and abusing other human beings. As we try to organize against unjust systems and institutions those that want to defend the system don’t have to do much to make our movements fall apart because so much has already been done to divide and separate us by the very society we are shaped within.

Even given all of this, people still come together and organize against oppression. “Growing up in an inherently racist or sexist society impacts you... what matters is how much you fight against it” (Glenn). Its not surprising then, that many occupiers, when asked what was great about (OSL) said it was getting to meet and engage with people from all over. One called it “an amazing space of people listening to each other... it had an electrifying feel” (Cat). Another said, “meeting all the different people standing for humanity as a whole” (Apple). A third enjoyed that, “Occupation is great for conversation, real adult conversation—people who disagree being able to talk about it” (Zach).

A space is created where people can come together, but still we feel isolated and push each other away. A key part of dividing those within resistance movements is the message that we internalize that we are alone; isolated. When one feels that aloneness, it is very difficult to believe that anyone wants to really be with you or work together with you. Even the most progressive of men who knows how to watch his behavior and language—not saying or doing anything overtly sexist—will still find it hard to believe that women want the real him in their lives, close and connected, fighting together for a better world. Similarly, people raised white in the culture of white people will have trouble seeing that their lives can be drastically enriched by having people of other cultures in it, or even if they see that, may have trouble believing that their own interests and passions can enrich the lives of other people.



Carving: James Meinert

These messages that we receive from an oppressive society, that wants to keep us separate, work really well, and so when a white person hesitates to reach out to a black person because of their own feelings of aloneness or not-being-wanted, it looks like, and ultimately is, racism, even if that person isn't a "racist."

Not a city on a hill

However, neither OSL nor the CW are forming "cities on a hill." Though, within OSL there are lots of examples of forming a way of listening and supporting each other that would pre-figure a better world including the "progressive stack" (the stack being the order people get to talk and be listened to in the general assemblies; progressive meaning that people of color, women, and new people are given a higher spot in the wait list). In OSL there are also caucuses for people of similar backgrounds to get together and make plans and proposals together. But these radical movements are not trying to be a shining example of how to live in the world. They aren't trying to get together only a group of like-minded people to move off to a compound together and show how well they can live together. Many occupiers told me of the extremely diverse group that came together—libertarians, anarchists, union members, socialists, republicans, green party, feminists, and the list goes on. In this mix of people from different backgrounds, community is formed, connections are made, stereotypes are broken down, and people move closer towards building a world we want to see without oppression.



photographer unknown

In the shell of the old

This is only possible because they put themselves into a space where differences were welcome. Both CWs and Occupiers have chosen to live a life with these issues, facing them every day both in the world and within themselves. As Chuck said about OSL, "When the camps started forming, you got to see all the problems of our communities, and homelessness has always been a problem of our communities." So while homelessness became an issue in the camp, there was the opportunity to create spaces to deal with it creatively. When all of the white people flew from St. Louis for the counties to avoid neighborhoods with black people, they weren't actually eliminating their racism, they just weren't living in places where they had to feel it all the time. The people that come together carry these histories and fears. "I've been so amazed by our racism or any ism, but they only surface in places like [Occupy]—I hope there are more spaces like that" (Cat). In spaces like Occupy people can work against them.

People have asked though, why is OSL a mostly white group? Why don't more people of color come out? One only has to look at the history of St. Louis and see the way that racism has divided black and white into different neighborhoods, schools, cultures, and classes. A group called Occupy the Hood formed in St. Louis to be a group that was comfortable for African Americans to be a part of, where their style of communicating, relaxing, listening to music, or disagreeing, was not discouraged. Work still needs to be done by people from white culture to notice the ways people of color are not welcomed.

So, if there are all these problems within our society as a whole and Occupy, how are we ever going to create a new society? Support groups, like the one the women in OSL started, are a good place to start. Common shared experience of not having their voices valued or having to fight harder to be heard at general assemblies led women to want to come together and create a space for encouragement and companionship. This type of group is the first step towards working against the confusions that make groups and movements dissolve. People with a commonality—be it the gender they were raised as, the culture they were raised in, the sub-group they are a part of, or whatever—need a space to get to process emotionally what it has been like to be a part of that commonality. Trust must be built. People must be listened to. Being listened to is maybe the most important part. It is important, also, that blame isn't always directed at the group that is the tool of the oppression suffered but that the source of the division and oppression—capitalism and our society—continue to receive our passion for change. (This doesn't mean that we give anyone a bye for cooperating with that oppression. Men need to be called out when they are acting sexist, white people when they are acting racist, young people when they are acting ageist, etc.) This way we get to take responsibility for changing the sources of these problems together rather than feeling vindicated by pointing our finger at individuals who are just being used by the oppression.

When we choose to live or place ourselves in a space where we will constantly encounter people who are marginalized because they are poor, or black, or brown, or cream colored, gay, or queer, or trans, or whatever it may be, then we get to confront and hopefully eliminate our biases and confusions with which we grew up. OSL and the CW have abundant examples of people coming through these imperfect movements and becoming more empowered. "Some of the homeless have gotten out of being homeless... I saw one woman's ability to talk to people really change and I've been amazed by that. I know I've been empowered" (Desiree). The society we will create will have abundant space for people to be with those who are different and similar and it will give us opportunities to grow stronger and work against our isolation, but we have to create it in the society that is crumbling around us now. So yes, we are creating a new society; a "beloved community." But it will be messy because we get to confront the old society within ourselves as we organize against it right here with all of the beat down, bruised, and beautiful people that we have in our communities. ✚

Occupy the Land

by Brenna and Eric Cussen Anglada

When we asked members of the Occupy Harrisburg movement on what they were focusing this winter, now that their encampment had moved indoors, one woman paused thoughtfully, then responded, “We’re building community.” We were all gathered in a funky local bookstore in downtown Harrisburg to listen to a talk by Charles Eisenstein, author of Ascent of Humanity, which brilliantly and ambitiously articulates the nature of humanity’s descent into Separation, as well as his more recent Sacred Economics: Money, Gift & Society in the Age of Transition, an in-depth exploration into a radically different concept of economic life. A bonus for us was to meet the many Occupiers in the audience (a few of whom were Catholic Workers), and ask them about the vision behind their activism. We were pleasantly surprised to hear that their primary focus during the winter months, aside from on-going direct action such as a medical clinic and preventing home foreclosures, was to listen to the needs and hopes of those living in Harrisburg. “What do [we,] the people of Harrisburg need,” they seemed to be asking, “and how can we best provide it for ourselves?”

Similar to much of the broader Occupy movement, the Harrisburg folks have created twice-weekly General Assemblies which have formed a model of organizing from below to meet their own needs, rather than wasting time demanding that others (i.e. the state or corporations) meet needs for them. It is a mode of organization that we as Catholic Workers call personalism and anarchism. While the Catholic Worker does engage in protest and resistance, and attempts to hold governments and institutions accountable for their actions, we believe that instead of “asking the Federal Government to solve [our] economic problems,” as Peter Maurin said, that “the best kind of organization is self-organization.”

Peter Maurin, the intellectual founder of the Catholic Worker, saw the direction the world was headed—towards centralization, continued usury, deepened greed, and alienation from labor—and called for a radically different way of practicing economics. The primary solution to such a revolution, he said, was a “return to a society where agriculture is practiced by most of the people.” Any radical transformation, by definition, has to go to the roots in its break with industrial, economic, and political power, and to Peter, this meant a return to the land. The land, Peter thought, could

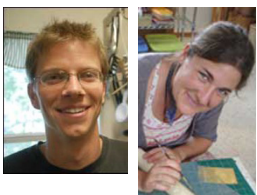
serve as the primary place for Catholic Workers and others to resist the inherent problems of capitalism by creating their own goods instead of depending on corporations for daily needs. The land would be, in other words, a locus for reclaiming our economic lives from the insidious forces of massive and distant institutions.



Co-author Brenna learned many skills in agricultural work and craftsmanship at the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Connecticut.

Throughout its existence, the Catholic Worker movement has attempted to bring about at least two forms of economic alternatives to capitalism: distributism, an economic philosophy that emphasizes the decentralization of land, wealth, and private property; and the gift economy, in which the exchange of freely-given gifts forms the foundation of life and economics. In the early part of the 20th century, distributism emerged as a “third way,” an alternative to capitalism and communism. Medieval economic life has animated much of the distributist vision, with its mixture of private and communal property, a shared ownership of the means of production, and a system centered on guilds, which were egalitarian unions for men and women engaged in a particular craft or vocation. Dorothy Day described it as a “way of cooperatives and credit unions, small industry, the village commune, and cottage economy.” To Day and Maurin, establishing Catholic Worker farm communities was a step toward embodying that vision.

Yet despite their status as ardent distributists, Dorothy and Peter lived more by an economy focused on gift than on a “cottage economy.” The movement’s free offering of hospitality



Brenna and Eric Cussen Anglada are looking forward to the permaculture course at New Hope this spring.

to the marginalized, as well as a radical paper at a penny a copy, formed the foundation of their gifted praxis. They gave without expectation of remuneration, and received what they needed to survive, in the form of gifts such as food, clothes, money, and labor.



Robin Upton

And while Peter believed “property is proper to man” [sic], he regularly gave away his property to anyone in need. In his hopes for the realization of a functional economy he believed that the beggar has a critical function in reminding us that we are all in fact beggars who are dependent on gifts for our very existence.

Today, we at New

Hope Catholic Worker Farm, a community currently of eight adults and six children on the land, have been experimenting with both economic visions. We have blended a variety of economics through gift, barter, selling, and part-time jobs. For example, while the fruits of our labor—honey, fruits and vegetables, hand-dipped candles, meat, dairy, and eggs—are now largely utilized by those of us living in community. We have also bartered our milk for organic whole wheat bread, our labor for bales of hay from a neighbor for our no-till raised beds, and our own turkeys for several bales of hay for our cows. Two summers ago, we cooperated with two other organic farms in our region in a form of distributism known as Community Supported Agriculture. For an upfront payment, anyone can buy a share into our farms and receive a variety of fruits and vegetables each week of the growing season. This model enables the consumer to experience local, healthy, fresh, chemical-free food while getting a deeper understanding of what foods are in season at what time. For us, it proved to be a worthy venture, helping us cover the costs of seeds and pay for other needs. And from our abundance we were able to gift food to other friends, a neighbor whose garden had been wiped out from rains, and our sister community Hope House, a house of hospitality for homeless men.

All of these modest attempts are only novel in our world of commodification. Recent generations have witnessed virtually everything—food, water, shelter, clothing, entertainment, childcare, education, healthcare, cooking, and more—become available for purchase. Only a few generations ago those ‘services’ were met by ourselves or by our neighbors. An alternative economics takes deeper root each time we make those things unavailable in the global economy and make them available in the realm of the local economy, barter, community, self-sufficiency, and gift. What this entails is a communal embrace of labor-intensive methods of meeting our own needs as much as we can. We cook from scratch much of the time, look after one another’s children, use cloth diapers, haul our water from a nearby spring, hang laundry, split wood by hand, garden largely without machinery, preserve food, heat our water with a wood-rocket stove, and build from recycled materials when we can. And as labor-intensive as these activities are, given the size of our community, we are still able to spend hours playing home-

made board games, hosting agronomic university school sessions, reading and writing, having bonfires and sitting around and—get this—talking. And we have the vision of building, over the next two or three years, a community center with our own timber as a space to host more crafting, dancing, communal cooking and food preserving, prayer, agronomic university ‘students,’ pilgrims in search of an alternative life, and the marginalized in need of healing.

For the last few months, as we have been trying to clarify our thoughts on economics, especially in light of our ongoing economic crisis, we have been encouraged by the writing of Charles Eisenstein. In the beginning, Eisenstein asserts, was the gift. Even before barter, the hunter-gatherers practiced a gift economy for millennia. Fundamentally, for all of us, “our lives are given us; therefore, our default state is gratitude.” And circulation, not simply exchange, is the primary dynamic of gift culture. The more gifts flow, the larger the circle of self. True security and community, Eisenstein insists, emerge through the act of giving as well as receiving.

These are not abstractions. We experience gratitude of the gift of the land that we dwell on everyday: 28.5 acres with pastures, ponds, woods, streams and springs, an acre or so of orchards and raised beds for vegetables, a milking cow, a flock of chickens, turkeys, bees, and countless other forms of life. The people that make up our community are an amalgam of each others’ gifts and strengths. Where one of us is gifted with the ability and desire to spend many hours in the garden or do hospitality, another loves to build or to cook or to split firewood, and still others may be attentive to doing the dishes or emptying the composting toilets or engaging with the children. Trust and relationship are built through this sharing of gifts leading to a more authentic security.

These experiments are, we emphasize, small and imperfect. We are consoled by Dorothy Day’s veneration of Therese of Liseux, whose “little way” rings so true. But we hope that these actions may, as Eisenstein writes, “help shorten the Machine’s life span.”



occupyposters.tumblr.com

We realize, like the Occupy Harrisburg folks do, that it is only in the building up of true community that we can render distant and oppressive institutions superfluous. †



From TC House

by Annjie Schiefelbein and Jenny Truax

It's an interesting time to be giving an update from Teka Childress House; it's a time of transition for us. After 4 ½ years of offering hospitality to a family of four, we are now living alone, and find ourselves offering hospitality of a different kind.

It's been quite a ride. We knew we were in for more than we bargained from early on. After purchasing the house in 2004, our intended two years of 'cosmetic' reconstruction turned into a 3½ year gut rehab. Later, we asked a group of 200+ Catholic Workers for advice on doing long-term hospitality for a family, and received only shrugs, widened eyes, and wishes of good luck. The family moved in before the house was actually finished being rehabbed, and two weeks after our friend Dan, Courtney's husband, was shot and killed two blocks away. Beginning our journey with the family, we assumed that two Catholic Workers with a combined two decades of experience at Karen House would find it relatively easy to do smaller-scale, longer-term hospitality. Now, how we laugh at our naiveté!

We have many happy memories of our 4 ½ years with the family: doing homework with the kids, setting up systems of rewards, going to parent teacher conferences, having dinners together. We had temporary custody of Robert for about seven months last year—a blessed time where we learned all about high school football, China, Xbox, and parenting in a new way. At the same time, we were often sobered by the dissonance between our daily reality and our hopes and dreams for the house. We clung desperately to the belief that no act of love is ever wasted. We grieved our inadequacy, helplessness and pessimism. We began to cringe at the oft-quoted passage from Dostoyevsky: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams." What do you do when love is mostly, or even all harsh and dreadful, when you feel that your love is poured out beyond your capacity? We had hoped to be very involved with the kids' lives: primary adults, favorite aunts, mentors. We had hoped for relationships that would be deeply enduring. Generally speaking, this happened only in glimpses rather than as a whole.

Throughout our time, we fought our own racism, classism and self doubt, seeking support from spiritual direction, friends, family and especially the Karen House community. We grieved our inadequacy and unhappiness, and helplessness, wondering what other Catholic Workers would say if they saw how desperate, pessimistic and unloving we felt. We read Catholic Worker texts for inspiration and guidance, but were never sure if they were suggesting we stop for lack of love, or keep going for righteousness' sake. We continually asked ourselves if our own happiness (which felt like a very abstract, privileged concept) was worth more than the opportunities we were giving the kids. For 4 ½ years the answer was no. While many days were not gratifying or easy, we always knew that this hospital-

ity was benefiting the kids in a huge way. The stability of our house, along with the extraordinary education they were receiving at De La Salle (cumulating in the admission to Catholic high schools), was changing their lives in immeasurable ways. We knew, and continue to know, that this means the world for their futures.

This past October, our answer changed; in the end, we knew we couldn't do it anymore. This decision coincided with Annjie's dad's cancer worsening, and while it felt like the only decision we could make, our grief is still immense. So we're in a huge transition — us, and the family both. They got into a transitional housing program, which means subsidized housing for two years. This will help the kids continue through good high schools; hopefully, they will get to decide their futures.

So, our pretty good dream didn't go the way we hoped it would. We know that most people in the world live with the remains of some tattered dream, whether caused by divorce, a physical limitation, poverty or death; this gives us much comfort. We clung desperately to the belief that no act of love is ever wasted. We grew immensely; over and over, we hit rock bottom, had to redefine ourselves and our love for the family, and find more within ourselves. Dorothy Day says, "Our faith is taxed to the utmost and so grows through this strain put upon it. It is pruned again and again, and springs up bearing much fruit." This is reassuring to us. It is gratifying to learn that you were stronger than you knew.

And now our lives change again. We have transformed the family's space into an apartment that is being used by Annjie's parents as her dad receives cancer treatments at Siteman Cancer Center. It has been wonderful to host them, and we are grateful to have the space and time with them. We will also offer the space to the Karen House community for a place of respite, meetings, etc. We plan to take a year off from hospitality. We've asked our community to hold us accountable to this plan - being surrounded by such need makes it very difficult not to respond. But this is our time for healing, a time to find hope and each other again. To that end we have a new wood burning stove that we and the dogs love, we're watching lots of "Battlestar Galactica," and intentionally making a lot of space for quiet in our lives. Little by little we will make sense of it. And even if we don't, we will hopefully find peace as we find out what life and love hold for us next. ✚





From Karen House

by Annjie Schiefelbein

The 'future item' list at our weekly consensus-based meeting is embarrassingly long. We have come up with a variety of ways to deal with the things that we don't get a chance to cover each week, but as items get removed others take their place. Despite this frustration, a lot can change at Karen House based on these decisions. I thought I would share some of our more recent changes with you.

Every month or so, we have 45 minutes of "Tradition" at our meeting. We have done many different things for Tradition over the years, but most recently, we've discussed the tenets from the Catholic Worker Aims and Means, one at a time. We've discussing the tenet's roots, how it is enacted at other Catholic Workers, how we've done it historically, and how we might live it better. One of the first tenets on our list was the Green Revolution and we found it rich with prospects for change. We have had a series of discussions leading to many changes in the house. We now use home-made green cleaning products, we installed tankless water heaters, dug a new garden bed in front of the house, insulated the house better, rehabbed our windows, switched to wind power through AmerenUE, and we're trying to do things to lessen our footprint in terms of waste, and especially food waste. We're excited to continue to grow in this area.

We have had several transgendered guests in the past years who were raised male but identify as women. We had occasion recently to ask ourselves about men who were raised as women - could we have someone who lives as a man as a guest in our all-women house of hospitality? In St. Louis, a person in transition from male to female can stay at women's shelters with some degree of safety (although not necessarily welcome or comfort). The same cannot be said for someone transitioning from female to male. In realizing this, we felt compelled to be such a welcoming place. We feel very positive and excited about supporting such an oppressed population with so many unmet needs. We created a process to help our guests and volunteers understand the needs and language around this issue, and have since welcomed our first guest who is living as a male. It went very well and we look forward to further expanding our welcome.

Christmas has always been a fantastic and frenzied time at Karen House. Most community members over the years describe Christmas as their favorite holiday here. This past year we went through an evaluation of Christmas. While it is an amazing time, we felt like some aspects of it did not mesh with our philosophies and hopes for the house and how we want to live. It is difficult to balance our values of simplicity and decentralization with the desire to have our Moms and kids have the Christmas of their dreams, a Christmas they deserve. In past years, all of our guests chose gifts out of donations that pour in from generous folks all over St. Louis. This year, we asked people not to bring any gifts except for Target gift cards and monetary donations. We then took each guest to Target to select their own gifts for their families. On one hand, it was hard to swallow, both requesting Target gift cards and giving Target our business. On the other, it greatly simplified the amount of work, allowed the women to choose gifts they wanted, helped the house feel less chaotic and more like home for our guests, and is maybe one step better than receiving toys purchased at

Wal-Mart. We consider this first Christmas as an evolving work in progress and hope we can continue to make the experience better and better for everyone involved.

The last big change I'll mention is a joyous one, the return of our dear friend Walter back into our midst. Walter was incarcerated for 21 months awaiting trial before he finally got his day in court and was found not guilty. We stayed in touch with him during his absence, but nothing compares to his presence in our house helping in every way and just being his normal, wacky self. We are overjoyed to have him back.

So many other changes! Community members have come and gone. Ellen and Daniel, two college-aged folks, are trying us on. Katherine (and her dog Maddie) left our community but are still in the neighborhood. Beth (and her dog Henry) will soon be leaving us. There is talk of Sarah and Timmy getting a dog, so hopefully we can avoid having any dog-free period in the house.

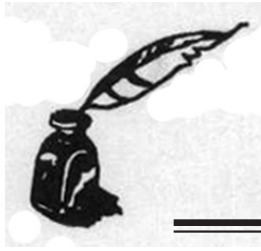
So many other changes come to mind, and I'm sure if all 12 community members wrote about the biggest changes in the last few years you would have a lot of different events. In fact I like the idea of comparing lists—maybe I'll add it to the future item



Carving: Mary Densmore



Angie Schiefelbein has been sporting a sassy short haircut but is also enjoying that it has been growing out.



From the Mail Bag



Dear Round Table,

Sorry, no check in the envelope. Stop shaking this letter! No money is going to fall out of it!

But thanks for publishing the issue about technology. Let me share a few thoughts. Basically I'm a pro-choicer when it comes to technology; I believe every person has a right to choose among technologies. This seems like it ought to be uncontroversial in a free society, but choice is exactly the thing that has explicitly been ruled out as a possibility ever since the Computer Revolution* was announced. When computers came along—and by that I mean when they became a thing anybody could buy—all you heard and read about morning, noon and night, from every sector of what you might call the Establishment, was that YOU MUST

HAVE THIS, you MUST get with the program, you MUST join the computer revolution, you are NOTHING without this thing, you will be a pathetic loser, a living fossil, and you will be LEFT BEHIND, you will never be able to work, or be educated or communicate with others or participate in society! You got this from all the politicians, the pundits, the editorialists, the educators, the professors, the professionals, the visionaries, the futurists...they spoke with one voice: A Utopia of empowerment and connectivity awaits those who go along, and for those who do not—a lifetime of torment on Monster Island!!! This seemed to go unnoticed, or at least uncommented-on. I think it's one of the major untold stories of our time, the way that force and coercion and threat have been used to impose this bogus revolution. It's just hard for me to understand why there must be absolute conformity on this ONE THING and no other—everybody loves diversity, every right-thinking person is Celebrating Diversity like crazy, but it only applies to race and religion and sexual orientation; on the question of use of technologies there is to be Zero Tolerance of diversity, unless it's the diversity of choosing Twit Pod over Blog Glob or whatever.

It occurs to me that since the Computer Age and the Internet Age have been with us, billions of words have been spoken and written on the subject, and I may be wrong but I don't believe there has been one sentence written or spoken by any respectable or authoritative commentator that even hinted at the possibility that any of us have a choice in the matter. Isn't that absolutely incredible?

Pretty regularly some essayist or op-ed guy will write some ruminative think-piece saying how regrettable it is that in our high-tech age the pace of life is so speeded up and why do people have to be on their cell phones all the time and gosh, I don't have time to get to all these emails, etc., etc., etc., but then before the end of the piece, the writer will say something to the effect of, "Of course, we must adapt to the world we live in and keep up with the times and accept what modern technology brings us; we can't live in the past, can we now?"

And it's that "of course," that I object to; whenever a writer says "of course," it's a sign that something deeply questionable is about to be said. I wonder what would happen if any pundit broke through the mental barrier and said, "You have a choice! You don't have to buy any of this shit." They'd probably be dragged off to re-education camp. At the very least they would lose all intellectual respectability.

I never got this "keep up with the times" business; to me it sounds a lot like "follow the herd". But what computers and the Internet offer people is a way that they can follow the herd while constantly being told that they're doing something revolutionary. No one is going to lose money selling a package like that.

Yours,
David Stein

* By the way, about the constant use of the term "revolution"—if computers represent a revolution, they are the first revolution that is a consumer product. You might think this would make people just the littlest bit skeptical about just how revolutionary all this is, but no...



Dear Round Table,

What a beautiful issue. Thank you! Are you familiar with the In the Land of the Living zine? It is a very worthy Christian green anarchy/primitivist effort. I enclose some literature, including two of my more recent pieces, plus a tiny donation.

Love to you all for 2012,
John Zerzan

The Round Table

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Teka Childress House

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St. Louis, MO. 63106

314-588-9901

www.KarenHouseCW.org

Little House Needs

- Washing machine for Little House

Karen House Needs

- Hygiene supplies (especially lotion, shampoo, deodorant, sanitary napkins), eco-friendly dish soap, sugar

- A truck to haul donations

- Do you know any potential employers who might be interested in hiring a guest of Karen House? Are you interested in helping our guests with internet job searching? We are hoping to help our guests more in this area. Call us (314-621-4052), we would love to talk more about it!

Kabat House Needs

- Weed Wacker

As Catholic Workers, we call for May 19-21 to be a weekend of nonviolent protest against the capitalism and militarism of NATO-G8. Catholic Worker communities around the country are invited to engage in "A Weekend without Capitalism" — a three day act of noncooperation, where we refuse to participate in the political and economic structures that oppress our sisters and brothers, harm our communities, and destroy our environment. We take time off work and school and, instead, invest this time into healthy, just, and sustainable alternatives for our communities. We will not support the corporate state by using our cars or consuming goods or services from which the state profits. Instead, we will do as Jesus taught us: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the imprisoned. We will protest injustice and war, host free markets and skills shares, work on community gardens, invest in alternative economics, act as peacemakers and organize our neighborhoods for direct action.

Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat

Join us in Chicago for the Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat May 12-14. For more information check the website or contact Karen House.

RoundTable Discussion!

Come to discuss resistance to militarism and capitalism, especially with the upcoming NATO summit in Chicago.

Friday, April 20th 7pm

Karen House Dining Room

We welcome your donations and participation. As Catholic Workers our hospitality to the homeless is part of an integrated lifestyle of simplicity, service, and resistance to oppression, all of which is inherently political. For this reason, we are not a tax exempt organization. Furthermore, we seek to create an alternative culture where giving is celebrated and human needs are met directly through close, personal human relationships. Thus, all of our funding comes from individuals like you who share yourself and your funds so that this work can go on.

Check www.KarenHouseCW.org for updates on Karen House, information on the Catholic Worker, an archive of past Round Tables, and more!