



# Rochester Catholic Worker

Rochester, New York — Spring 2013

## Immigration Reform and Workers Rights - Rev. Chava Redonnet

*Any worthwhile overhaul has to attack systemic abuse of immigrant labor*

In the twenty months since the migrant ministry began, we have seen the hard lives, the mind-boggling work days, the poor living conditions that the migrant farm workers in our little church endure year in and year out. In that time, one thing has grown more and more clear: the hardship and injustice they live with is made much harder by the fact that they are in this country without documents.

Because they are undocumented, they have no voice. They cannot speak up or organize for more just working and living conditions without making themselves vulnerable to deportation. They live in the margins, under the radar. They manage without bank accounts, insurance or drivers licenses. They are unable to plan for the future. They have no protections. Because they are undocumented, families are torn apart.

Our letters, emails and calls **RIGHT NOW** will make a difference for good. I believe it. Comprehensive Immigration Reform seems possible BUT if it doesn't include the farm workers it's not going to help the folks in our little church. Please write or call, and tell our decision-makers that farm workers must be included, that they need a path to citizenship.

It is so easy to write to congresspeople these days. Just google their names, find their websites, and send an email on their contact page.✉

## Public Stations of the Cross - Good Friday, March 29, 2013

St. Joseph's House, the House of Mercy and Rochester Pax Christi will enact once again a public Stations of the Cross in downtown Rochester on Good Friday beginning at 11am in front of the Kodak Building on State Street. The purpose of the Stations is to publicly repent for the many ways in which Jesus is crucified today – in the cruel treatment of the poor, in America's commitment to growing inequality in the name of "free enterprise", in our country's continued killing of innocent and "enemy" alike while the Church whose founder commanded us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us stand by silently, in complicity.



*Public Stations of the Cross at Rochester's Hall of Justice*

Please join us. The walk around downtown Rochester, stopping at various locations that symbolize the contemporary Crucifixion, takes about two hours. A sample follows.

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**Public Stations of the Cross** *(continued from p.1)*

**THIRTEENTH STATION – JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**  
**BUS STATION**

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You,

People: Because by your Death and Resurrection You have saved us.

Leader: The Statue of Liberty bears the inscription, “Give me your poor, your tired, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Yet when the poor cross our borders, the ugly spirits of nationalism and prejudice arise, calling us to exclude “illegal immigrants.” In recent years, the fear of “terrorism” has been used to intensify the fear of “The Other,” leading to harsher treatment of “illegal immigrants.” Hundreds die every year trying to cross the border from Mexico into the US. Between 1998 and 2004, at least 1,954 human beings died trying to cross the border. In January, 2010, ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security, admitted that 107 immigrants had died in their custody since 2003. We do not know how many more have died since then. ICE agents have patrolled the bus stations and trains of upstate New York, demanding ID from travelers and making a mockery of the cherished American ideal of “freedom.” The federal detention center in Batavia incarcerates many immigrants. Some of our loved ones from the House of Mercy and St. Joseph’s House have been humiliated, prosecuted, and incarcerated by ICE.

LET US PRAY. ☩

**Beautiful ugliness - Alex**

*Standing in solidarity on the front lines.*

The train from “Penn Station” was slowly strolling thru from Syracuse to Rochester, making a late arrival of 1 hour and a half delay. So it is close to 2am, no pick up, in a city I had no idea of it’s layout.

My walk to St. Joe’s was a reminder of what was to come; that I will be challenged to daily recommit myself to the work of “The House” with and for “our guests”.

I experienced a moment of clarity when I saw a fellow Worker on a break and a certain gentlemen of another works of mercy ministry

came in to speak about his organization; at first he (the gentleman) could not tell who to talk to - who was the

figure of authority?. We all blended in as if who’s the guest and who’s the Worker?

Every day we show up to life, and in solidarity take on the weight of the task until it is complete. I am not any different from those we serve.



It is a beautiful-ugly experience, that balances it’s self out through the day. There are always moments of assurances that unspoken makes the hustle of the day evaporate into the cloud of forgetting. Love appears disguised in the heart and the lives’ of all who walk through the threshold of this House of Hospitality. St. Joe’s has been

both a humbling and learning experience that I will carry for the rest of my life.☩

*When we wrote about this last Fall we had tentatively named the new facility Hope House; now that has been changed to.....*

## **DOROTHY DAY HOUSE - Tim Sigrist**

*Our own HOUSING FIRST initiative*

This joint venture with House of Mercy and St. Mary's Parish attempts to mend the safety net for hard to place men and women. We feel it is truly fruitless to wait until our many needy brothers and sisters have 'the rent\$ and security' before we offer them an apartment. All landlords do that. We know that most people who are chronically homeless want decent housing but have not been able to attain the capital to achieve it; nor have they been able to navigate the system so the county can help them out.

Our venture houses citizens, first; accepts them; offers them an advocate. Together, the two decide the best path. We also believe free medical assistance starts immediately. After about a year, when a resident gets on his/her feet, (s)he will make way for a new person matched with a new advocate. The community is taking form in a twelve- unit apartment building (407 South Ave.) across from St. Joseph's. Eight units are already occupied by veterans filtered to the former landlord by the Veterans Outreach Center just down the street. We have embraced them as our first members.



All tenants will be invited into the program and will be asked to follow our guidelines. All rents will be subsidized or waived. So far, we've placed four people. They are, by our design, residents who will be asked to give back. The committee has accepted our first chronically homeless candidates. As we transition, every room gets a new coat of paint and is fully furnished. We are committed to treating new residents with the dignity they deserve. Additionally, we are committed to being good Southwedge neighbors.

St. Joe's has welcomed all comers through its door at 402 South Ave. for food, housing and clothing – no charge - for seventy-two years. Aside from two paid interns in our bakery program, we pay only two employees: our bookkeeper and our cook. Donors trust that the vast majority of their dollar reaches men and women who really need it. Every outlay is responsibly scrutinized.

We are presently asking the city for tax-free status: to join St. Joseph's House and our 'recovery' apartment house at 85-87 Alexander St. Studies across the nation have shown the enormous tax savings such programs bestow back to city and county. To be clear: healthy, secure citizens are not 'frequent flyers' at emergency rooms. HOUSING FIRST program is our answer to this problem.

As we navigate this new territory we'll need a help-line for our mission. Financial support for our program is essential. **Would you consider a small donation?** ☞

The Catholic Worker oral historian Rosalie Riegle has just published two new books featuring interviews with dozens of nonviolent resisters, including Harry Murray.

## Let those who have eyes to see, see ... - Hazel

Several times a week I share time with our guests in hospitality, watching TV dramas and all of their attendant commercial ads. Watching TV is something I don't normally do, but for some reason doing so in a room full of people without homes, money, education, or the skin color of the ownership class has been a fascinatingly uncomfortable experience for me.

It is unsettling to view television through such a lens, the lens of marginalization. Sitting in this room, with these men and women who've been kicked to the curb of 'empowered' consumerism without so much as a "thanks for playing, better luck next time", I am slowly becoming more and more painfully self-conscious of the assumptions that have guided me.

For me, TV has always been a mirror rather than aspirational portal – the actors are mostly the same color as me, and they live in homes much like those in which I have lived. Most of them speak like I do, and they drive to and from jobs that I could have seen myself holding. The premises of most shows don't seem strange or unknown, but rather plausible. Suddenly, in this room, with these people, I find myself automatically deconstructing every televised assumption of what life is, transposing in my head the gaudy orchestrated extravagance into the more dissonant key of poverty.

Sometime during *Law and Order:SVU*, I lean over and ask the guest next to me, "Do you ever get the sense that TV is written by rich white people, for rich white people?" He chuckles, but with less humor than resignation, and replies, "Man, I ain't never felt no other way about TV." He understands, and yet still stares, transfixed.

Advertisements feature diamond rings, cruise ship vacations, new furniture ensembles, and luxury vehicles. "SAVE! Hundreds of dollars when you buy a new living room set!" That is, if you have a living room in which to put it, let alone the thousands upon which you'll receive your hundreds in discount. Particularly discomfiting is an ad that comes on for for a private

rehab facility in Malibu. It offers a place where one can find the "perfect setting to heal body, mind, and spirit" – for a price.

The sad irony is that many of the people in this room with me have active and disruptive addictions, and a message such as this serves only as a harsh but unspoken implication that where they are now is not the place where healing is found. Based on my time here so far, I am inclined to disagree. Though it may be harder to see on some days than on others, there is a lot of love here at St. Joe's.

May we all be so blessed to see through our struggles to the love that underlies. ☪



In Baltimore last Fall, 230 members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops unanimously voted to push for the sainthood of Dorothy Day. It was reported by the Catholic News Service (CNS) that these same bishops could not agree on a statement on the U.S. Economy.

How is it possible that 230 bishops could unanimously endorse Dorothy's sainthood, but could not make a clear, truthful, unambiguous statement about the massive economic injustice and equality in the United States?

These gentlemen could easily have contacted any Catholic Worker and Resistancecommunity, or simply have searched any of Dorothy's writings about our fractured system of capitalism.

It is stick-up in broad daylight! What could be clearer? Presently 400 U.S. families, less than 1% of our population, control half the nation's wealth.

*Viva House Catholic Worker, Fall/Winter 2012*

## House News

We have been working with a group of RIT students as a class project that they have spent more than a year on the design of a **cot for our shelter**. For sanitary purposes, we needed a light weight cot that stored easily out of the way, can handle a 250- pound guest and could be cleaned easily. They have visited the house many times, talked with the folks that run the shelter, given us a sample of their first design, gone back to the drawing board at least twice. David Kirsch was the coordinator on the project. Delivery was the end of February.

Fall and winter at St. Joe's have seen much change, as seems to be par for the course around here. September brought **Alex** from Connecticut by way of Illinois. He's always on his toes with work split between the kitchen and hospitality, and a pinch of office work thrown in here and there for good measure. December brought **Hazel** from near and far by way of Colorado. He also divides his time between the kitchen and hospitality, as well as the night shelter. Both Alex and Hazel are Spanish speakers.

December also saw **Vanessa** move on after 8 months at the House. Jose who has been with us approaching a year now handles our Tuesday afternoon meal formally done by Vanessa. **Bobby** who has been with the House more than a year has put his imprint on the kitchen meals as our kitchen coordinator. The newest Worker reported in the end of last month, **Stergios**. He discovered St Joe's volunteering over the past year. He starts off handling nights and weekends duties.

Many of us at St Joe's had the pleasure of seeing **Caroline Kristoffersen** marry **Joe Lavoie** last month at Spiritus Christi with our Rev. Chava officiating. They met at the Catholic Worker where Caroline had just finished College; she had signed on as a Worker and Joe was on his winter break from the University of New Hampshire. A number of former interns and Workers were also in attendance.



When we close for our semi-annual cleaning and maintenance in April we will be rearranging our toilet, shower and washer/dryer area in hospitality thanks to the generosity of the six Hickey children of E. James Hickey who was a generous

supporter of the House before his passing. This is the sixth Christmas that they have sponsored a St Joe's project in their Dad's memory.

The **bike repair clinic** that started at St Joe's many moons ago resumes Wednesday April 24th. It is very important to our guests for many of them rely on their bikes for transport. This is run by R Community Bikes on Hudson Avenue. It is a long-time association for both parties.

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**House News** *(continued from p.5)*



Early December saw George’s swim buddies drop off seven car loads of **men’s winter clothing** that the RAMS (Rochester Area Masters Swimmers) team had collected along with a HiVac suction machine for our maintenance man.

**Chava** continues to break the bread of life with her migrant parishioners of the Oscar Romero Church, and celebrates mass weekly at St. Joe’s on Sundays at 11 am. ☩

**Haiti Food Program** - Sarah Ahimsa

*Celebrating in style with Pen ak Pwason*

Shortly after New Year’s Day, I received a call from Somane Augustama, the director--or “mother” as they call her in Haiti-- of the “Pen ak Pwason (Bread and Fishes)” food program for the elderly and disabled that St Joe’s supports.

She was excited, enthusiastically telling all about their recent holiday party. New Years Day is the most important holiday in Haiti. Not only it is the beginning of a new year, but it is also Haitian Independence Day, a day celebrated with pride in their forefathers’ accomplishments and tasty food (meat) that some people don’t eat any other time of the year.

Somane told me that, on this important day, all the guests showed up for the party “as if they were people who are well taken care of.” Some shared with her that they didn’t even have any coffee at the house that morning with which to celebrate, and how thankful they were for the program. As they began to eat the delicious meal of chicken, rice, fried plantains, popcorn, and cake, they started to sweat, as only people who have gone a long stretch from their last meal can do, and she had to go around wiping brows. After the meal there was dancing and speeches. Unfortunately, Somane’s camera is broken, so we don’t have any new photos yet. All the guests are keeping St. Joe’s and all the donors in their prayers for “tout tan (always)”

The holiday party, including new tables and chairs to replace the broken down benches and T-shirts for the program, was funded through generous contributions to St. Joe’s specifically for this program, and sales of Haitian crafts at the Alternative Fair and Spiritus Christi Craft Fair. Thank you to all who participated! ☩



“No matter how corrupt the church may become, It carries within itself the seeds of its own regeneration .....as a convert, I never expected much from the bishops. In all history popes, bishops and father abbots seem to have been blind and power hungry and greedy. I never expected leadership from them. It is the saints who keep appearing all through history, who keep things going.”

*Dorothy Day*



**Bread for All** is now taking orders for their incredibly tasty IRISH SODA BREAD!

Based on a secret recipe passed along from Peg Gefell's grandmother, we offer 2-pound loaves of organic goodness – ready for you on **Friday, March 15**. We will take orders up until **Thursday, March 14**. We are a phone call away: **775-9135**.

Irish Soda Breads can be picked up at our bakery, 220 Mt. Hope Ave., at the corner of Mt. Hope and Hamilton, on Friday March 15, from noon until 8 p.m. Special arrangements can be made.

Irish Soda Breads cost a modest \$r – and only \$5 for our Bread For All subscribers!

## Trainee Wants to Give Back - Tim Sigrist

We've shared in these pages the personal successes of some of our guests. The Bakery Trainee Program has been rich with positive stories. Many have found employment. Some continue to work in our kitchen. One has gone back to school. Our very latest has just finished her 1st 10 week session. She is an excellent baker; AND, already she has forged a plan "to give back".

I'm speaking of Jasmin Reggler. She is a 29 year old who was raised in Brooklyn. She met her husband in Buffalo and together are raising 2 year-old Lynnox in the South Wedge.

Jasmin has an idea. She went to the internet and found support and precedent for it, by the way. It's called The Free Store. Its foundation is simply put: Give what you have, take what you need. She has plenty of sweat equity promised but she needs capital to begin.

To analyze this a little more: its true, the Worker gives away everything that is donated to us ... free of charge. But there is a broad range of additional people who don't find it easy to take advantage of us. We understand that. Without a doubt, there's a certain

endurance one has to subject him/her self to, to get our free clothing. To many needy, it can be accomplished. To others, especially families, it's ambitious. "The gauntlet" out on our side entrance, discourages most women and some men. We welcome everyone and there is a certain CALM which we work hard to maintain BUT...

To extend our hand to more of our citizens in need, let's help Jasmin help others! She'll have our support and, assuredly, will proceed cautiously. Could you help? For now ... \$capital. Stay tuned, won't you? ☞

## Unbroken

We daily break the bread of life  
 With those whose lives are broken  
 We daily struggle to pull the knife  
 Lest these wounds remain unspoken  
 We ask to see through sheens of strife  
 So that our love be more than token  
 Seeing that of God in each eternal life  
 May this holy sight remain unbroken

Hazel

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality  
Rochester Catholic Worker Community

*Some of us live in houses; some of us live on the street; some of us have a room of our own, or a bed and a place to keep; some of us have a cot or piece of a couch or patch of floor to return to each night; some hold special positions of power and roles with specific responsibilities, some do whatever they can. Our aim is to try each day to "build a new society in the shell of the old" as we practice the various works of mercy and labor with whatever resources, physical as well as spiritual, that we have been given at the time.*

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**House Needs:**

Prayers	Sugar	<b>BLEACH</b>	Hoodies	Athletic Socks
Butter	Boots/Sneakers	Toilet Paper	39-gal. Trash Bags	Pillows
<b>Laundry Soap Powder</b>	Jeans/Cords	Coffee	<b>Razors</b>	<b>Toothbrushes/Paste</b>
Men's Underwear (32-44)	Jelly/Jam	Single Sheets	<b>BATH TOWELS</b>	<b>Deodorants</b>

CALENDAR

March 1, 80th Birthday of The Catholic Worker  
March 17, Foot & Hair Clinic  
March 29, Good Friday, downtown Way of the Cross  
March 31, Easter  
April 14, Shelter closed  
April 15, House closed for maintenance & cleaning  
April 24, Bike repair clinic opens

**Celebrants for  
5:00 p.m. Tuesday Ecumenical Service**

*We suggest that you call the House in case the service time or celebrant has been changed.*

3-12 Cathy Mrzywka	5-14 Minister Joann Kaiser
3-19 Deacon Bill Coffey	5-21 Rev Matthew Nivkoleff
3-26 Donna Eckert	5-28 Rev. Chava Redonnet
4-02 Elder Charles Morgan	6-04 Mike Boucher
4-09 Rev. Matthew Nivkoleff	6-11 Sr. Grace Miller
4-16 Pastor Thomas Felton	6-18 Rev Matthew Nivkoleff
4-23 Fr. Larry Tracy	
4-30 Deacon Tom Cleary	
5-07 Rev Michelle Avant	

Felton