



Rochester Catholic Worker

Rochester, New York — Winter 2011–2012

Harry's Musings

by Harry Murray

The Nevada gathering provides a focus to help us to interpret the bewildering pattern of recent events. One gets the sense that a cosmic shift may be just over the horizon; perhaps we are seeing a grain of mustard seed begin to grow. Within the past few months, "Occupy Wall Street" has grown from a relatively small group of youth camping out in Zuccotti Park near the nation's financial center into a nascent social movement, with "Occupy" groups in many of the nation's cities, including Rochester. Eventually, even the corporate media were forced to shift attention from the gaudy, well-financed Tea Party, and begin to give some coverage to the grassroots Occupiers.

Meanwhile, one after another "America's enemies" have fallen, killed by drones or by their own people after the U.S. military facilitated their overthrow. Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Muammar Qaddafi, Anwar al Awlaki—all were killed brutally in what amounted to little more than lynchings.

And how much safer do Americans feel now that our leading enemies are gone? Have our military accomplishments fostered peace or only an increased hatred for an all-powerful American empire increasingly able to kill by remote control from thousands of miles away?

And now, the Obama Administration has sent 100 military "trainers" to Uganda in an attempt to eliminate

continued on p. 2

Radical Discipleship

by Joe Lavoie

Last month I flew over two thousand miles to Las Vegas to participate in the national Catholic Worker Gathering. The experience was incredible. I met such beautiful disciples, talked over cups of coffee, sang some songs, and participated in some pretty incredible workshops (Anarchy, Greening the Catholic Worker Movement, Healthy Community Models, Immigration Reform). A week later I'm struck both in awe of the wisdom I

gleaned, but also in the frail state of my social reality. The truth is that I learned an incredible amount at these workshops, and that frightens me. If I read my notes (excitedly) to my great, great grandfather, or his grandfather, I can imagine him saying (not excitedly at all) "yea?"

I am 22 years old. I have a degree from an American university in philosophy, but living in community and

doing this work feels like reinventing the wheel to me. How could I have invested so much money in my education, and yet feel totally unqualified at my current job: title- Catholic Worker, description- cleans toilets, sweeps floors, makes coffee, gives hugs, smiles? And why is it that I doubt I am alone?

What happened? Marx would say it's the inherent structure of capitalism. Debord would point to the spectacle. Adorno and Horkheimer would scoff at the

continued on p. 2



International Catholic Worker Gathering, Las Vegas, Nevada

Harry's Musings (continued)

Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army and his top commanders. The rather scant media coverage, as usual, simply accepted the Administration's account of its motive for sending troops and generally failed to mention the reserves of oil in the region as if that could have no bearing on the deployment. One has to wonder what role Predator or Reaper drones may play in this operation. Do we need to test their prowess under jungle conditions?

Two years after the Wall Street Collapse and Bailout, the economy is still in the grips of a "non-recession," and the federal government has done nothing of substance to reform the financial practices and institutions that created the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression.

Meanwhile it seems like half the country is getting ready to return to power the Republican Party, whose thirty-year program of tax breaks for the rich has generated, not jobs, but unemployment and misery for millions of Americans. Relatively few seem to realize that "trickle-down" economics can't work if the billions the rich have saved in taxes have been invested in outsourcing jobs elsewhere rather than creating jobs locally. Reduced taxes for the rich benefit the rich and no one else.

None of these events would come as a surprise to Dorothy Day or Peter Maurin, and it's not difficult to imagine how they would respond. They were adamant in their belief that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is antithetical to capitalism and to war. They supported efforts to decentralize the economy—to eliminate corporate power and return to people power over their own lives—the very things that Occupy Wall Street seems to call for. The Catholic Worker message of building a society within the shell of the old, a society in which it is easier to be good, is as relevant today as when the movement was founded in 1933. ☩

Radical Discipleship (continued)

Culture Industry. Taylor would say it's the rise of the buffered self. And these all fit... sort of. What all these great thinkers might agree on is that for numerous reasons the communal person was replaced by the rugged individual. The result: over two hundred Catholic Workers gathering in Las Vegas to try and figure out what it is to be a person.

Many of us have the privilege of learning how to be a student or a business administrator. There are classes on how to be a leader, and there are books on how to be good mothers and fathers. We've become very good at our roles, at our professional lives, but what about being a person?

The rugged individual is a mobile resume within a network of institutions; the person is gentle, fragile for a time, and especially vulnerable without the support of a community (defined broadly—group of two or more persons connected socially, culturally, and/or economically). A community is not an institution because a person is not a role or an assumed profession.

There is always hope in this crazy world, and I found a good chunk of it at the national gathering listening to Eric Anglada and Mary Moody talk about "Greening the Catholic Worker," i.e., let's try not to poison everything, especially our guests, with pesticides, preservatives, pollution, and urban shenanigans. Then some more hope was heaped on from Caryl Griffith with some advice as to how persons might live together without completely losing their minds. These talks are important, take seriously, almost with a professional dedication, the necessity, the complications and the joys of simply living.

I have no answers, but have found that living within a community, with other people who have the courage to also not have the answers, is a start on the road to understanding the questions. Being in community with others, in whichever model best suits you, is a beautiful way of stripping off silly labels we cling onto, e.g., student, middle class, manager, retiree. And though when our false self begins peeling off, when our true narrative becomes more and more exposed, we may feel naked, we might do well to remember how this all started, in that Garden long ago.

While St. Joe's is no Eden, it's a beautiful place where people may come to try and to learn what it is to be a person, to serve others, and to love God. This community thing makes the naked feeling more comfortable, consequently making this work not just bearable but wonderful. If you ever want to come over and talk about not having the answers, swing on by St. Joe's. Or maybe someday you'll join our community, stand naked with us, and humbly ask God for Her guidance with all this person stuff. Thanks and God Bless. ☩

White House Arrests; Tar Sands Pipeline by Rachael Morlock

On Friday, September 2, Joe Lavoie and I were among 1,253 people arrested in a two-week sit-in at the White House. After reading a call to action issued by leading environmental scientists and activists, including James Hansen, Bill McKibben, and Wendell Berry, we felt compelled to join those opposing the Keystone XL Pipeline.

The proposed 1,700-mile pipeline would carry oil from the Tar Sands in Alberta, Canada, across six states to refineries in Texas. This is environmentally, culturally, and physically hazardous to those living along the pipeline's path, many of whom were represented at the sit-in: there were farmers whose lands will be arrogated; citizens whose fresh water sources lie in the pipeline's path; and members of Indigenous communities in both Canada and the United States who are already affected by oil production from the Tar Sands.

Tar Sands yield oil only after a resource- and energy-intensive mining process. The oil lies beneath Canada's boreal forest, which is being cleared daily. The extraction process requires vast amounts of fresh water, and fracked gas produces three times more greenhouse gases than the production of conventional oil. The industrial process of mining the Tar Sands has created a hellish landscape the size of Florida with toxic waste pools so large they can be seen from outer space.



Tar Sands Pipeline protest in front of the White House. Photo courtesy of Rob Capriccioso, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com>

At the sit-in, I was most moved by the witness of indigenous residents of Alberta. Living downstream from the Tar Sands, their small communities are already ravaged by rare cancers and respiratory diseases. Air and water are compromised by leaks from waste pools and by compounds and pollutants like benzene that are released in oil production. Both the health and cultural identity of these increasingly marginalized communities are severely threatened.

Looking beyond the immediate dangers of the pipeline, we must also examine our oil use in general. Now is the time to decrease our dependence on fossil fuels. The climate is changing. This is not news to vulnerable populations: the residents of island nations threatened by rising sea levels, people suffering from drought and famine in Africa, communities dependent on glaciers for fresh water, to name just a few.

Pipeline supporters champion the opportunity to create jobs for our battered economy and to use “ethical oil” from our friendly neighbor, Canada. However, if we seek jobs, why not create jobs in clean energy that will bring life rather than destruction and pride rather than shame? If we value fairly obtained resources, why not turn away from the mirage of “ethical oil” and toward the promise of sustainable energy?

Without a presidential permit from Obama, the Keystone Pipeline cannot be built. But in order to resist the pressure of big oil, Obama needs to know that he has the support necessary to seek alternatives. Together, let us hold Obama accountable to the promise he made to “heal the planet.” Please add your voice to those opposing the Keystone XL Pipeline and call for a national commitment to restore and preserve our only home. ☞

Our Day in the Desert

by Rev. Chava Redonnet

Drums were beating as we gathered in the desert. It was Sunday, October 9, the last day of our Catholic Worker National Gathering in Las Vegas, and we were at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site to protest as Catholic Workers and others have protested, so many, many times. Civil disobedience has been done there so much that they've built holding pens right inside the entrance, making it all so perfunctory that Harry says it doesn't even count as civil disobedience, any more. But we did it, anyway.

Shoshone drums were beating because this poisoned land was stolen from the Shoshone Tribe. An 1863 treaty giving them this land was ignored by the U.S. government, which took this land to explode nuclear bombs thinking it a wasteland. The desert is beautiful, teeming with life, but you've got to get up close to see it. Not a wasteland, at all. The day before, we'd all bought permits from the Shoshone Tribe, giving us permission to walk on their land.

The drums stilled as we celebrated the Mass, led by Franciscan Fr. Louis Vitale, co-founder of the Nevada Desert Experience. Fr. Louie looked just like our old mural of St. Francis as he blessed us, hands out, in his Franciscan robes. All he needed was the birds in his hands! Our joyful, peaceful Mass ended with us gathering in the road, holding banners, preparing to cross the line onto the test site.



Catholic Worker blockade at Creech Air Force Base

Drums beat again as we crossed the line, 58 of us, and were herded into the holding pens, men to the left, women to the right. Our wait was not long. After only fifteen minutes or so they were ready. I was the first one out. The guard filled in my name, height, weight, eye and hair color, but never even asked for my address. I walked up the long, silent road back to the parking lot, and decided that we needed a greeting committee to welcome each person as they left the test site. Hugs galore. It really wasn't all that bad, but hugs are always a good thing!

That was the easy part of the day. Much more serious was our protest at Creech Air Force Base that afternoon. No ho-hum, here come the protesters, there! Eighteen people chose to risk arrest, knowing that there could be serious consequences. Drones get deployed from Creech, just as they do from Hancock Air Force Base here in New York. Most of us stayed

outside, singing and showing our support as our friends knelt in a line, blocking the entrance to the base. Our friends were arrested, taken away, and not released until about midnight. Gratitude and peace to all those who put their own well-being on the line, trying to make a more just and peaceful world. God bless you, friends. ☪

Calendar

November

- 18 School of the Americas Weekend
- 24 Thanksgiving Dinner

December

- 1 Hancock 38 Decision
- TBA Christmas Dinner

An Appreciation

We at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality want to pause during this holiday season to express our sincerest appreciation to all those in our large extended family: our volunteers, our benefactors, our guests, our workers. We know that each of you contributes immeasurably to our ability to create hospitality and warmth both physically and spiritually.

It is through your support that St. Joe's enters its 72nd year at 402 South Avenue as an oasis of hope and comfort.

We hope that what you share with us; your time, your treasure, your prayers, and your company, returns to you many times over.

We are grateful for you!

House Comings and Goings by Rev. Chava Redonnet



At the end of September, **Rafael**, our cook for the last 12 plus years retired. He said good-bye to our Monday, Tuesday, and

Wednesday kitchen volunteers and shared memories with some that were here years before he arrived.

Joe Lavoie and **Rachael** went to Washington, D.C. and got themselves arrested at the White House, protesting the Tar Sands pipeline. Now that he's finished college, Joe's doing the Catholic Worker thing thoroughly, already

getting arrested twice! **Rachael** continues in her quiet way, doing a million or so things that sustain us. She works at the bakery coordinating sales and helps me with the St. Romero's bulletin, to name only two.

Sheila has transformed the third floor. In twenty-four years, I don't remember ever seeing it be such a pleasant and welcoming space. She's visiting her son in NYC during November. **Jen** is startling us with her energy: she has declared all-out war on bedbugs. Catholic Worker nonviolence ends where bug bites on our guests begin.

Tom, Harry, Sheila, Joe and I went to Nevada for the National Catholic Worker Gathering in

October, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker. We met many kindred spirits, participated in "Occupy Las Vegas," learned a lot, gawked at the city (cognitive dissonance, just walking down the street in Las Vegas!), and got arrested in the desert, trespassing at the Nuclear Test Site. Just an ordinary CW gathering.

In September we put a final coat on the parking lot and stripped the parking area to make it easier for folks to see where to park ... after all these years.

Oscar Romero Church had its first Visioning Day in October. Please send me an email if you'd like to get our weekly bulletin. ☞

Predator Drones Save Lives and Other Oxymorons

by *Harry Murray*



Harry Murray (left) holds banner that reads "STOP DRONE ATTACKS" with unidentified protestor outside Creech Air Force Base.

"Predator Drones Save Lives, You F-ing Nazis!" A young man screamed these words at me as he drove by. I was standing on the roadside in the Nevada desert outside Creech Air Force Base, protesting against the drone control center there along with a hundred or so Catholic Workers from across the country. The words aptly sum up the logic of the political right. Predator drones, unmanned aircraft armed with Hellfire missiles, do save American lives, since there are no pilots aboard to be shot down.

Apparently the lives of Afghans, Pakistanis, Yemenis, don't count—regardless of their guilt or innocence. And, although I've been misidentified as a Communist more times than I can remember, this was the first time I'd been called a Nazi. Nonviolence as Naziism—the idea seems as incomprehensible as the denial of global warming or the ludicrous notion that cutting taxes on the rich will benefit anyone but the rich. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

On Columbus Day weekend, five of us from St. Joe's journeyed to Las Vegas for the national Catholic Worker get together. Vegas seems an odd place for Catholic Workers to gather, but it served to remind us of what the Worker stands for and what it stands against.

Within hours of our arrival, we joined the Occupy Las Vegas demonstration, marching down the Strip with 2,000 others, starting at the New York, New York casino complex, where we stood in the shadow of the "Statue of Liberty" and walked alongside the "Brooklyn Bridge."

We marched with an incredible variety of people, from the V-masked Anonymous to the unionized casino dealers. It seemed almost as fitting a place as Wall Street to decry the excesses of corporate capitalism—this incredible boom town rising in the middle of the desert, surrounded by mountains, and infused with poverty and homelessness—even before its real estate market became one of the hardest hit by the Market Collapse.

On Saturday morning we helped out at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker breakfast line, held in a vacant lot, where nearly 300 homeless folks were served a pancake and egg breakfast. The stark contrast between wealth and poverty in this city rivals the contrast between the water-gutted, well-manicured lawns of the rich and the desert, which often lies just feet away from the lush lawn, separated only by a high wall that demarcates the line between desert and green grass. ☞

An Era Ends
by Tim Sigrist

Eleven years ago, Rafael succeeded our first paid cook, Mike Ruggiero. To understate, feeding a hundred hungry souls is a pressure cooker (thank God for our fine and dedicated volunteer helpers).

AND, thank God for Rafael Esquilin. He was all this: comical, explosive, lovable, but most of all, steady. In recent years, the job took its toll on him, physically. He pushed through it to try to make ends meet, financially. And he loved the place.

Hopefully, there's a silver lining on this last grey cloud. Applying for SSD a third time, today, might be a charm. He was refused each time because of the paltry amount we were able to pay him.

On top of this, our Department of Human Services decided he now makes too much to receive Medicaid. You tell me, how far his three-figure retirement

check goes: rent, utilities, food, doctor's bills, medicine ... really!?

He approaches everything with a positive attitude and sleepless nights. (Although, I've noticed the lightness and humor are back, I hadn't pondered their severe reduction, until now.)



He still stops in to say hello to his "ladies" and Big Jim; test the coffee to see if it's muddy enough; share an ailment; often a letter in hand for us to interpret his latest benefits rejection. Will he move back to Puerto Rico to join his sister or to Philly where his seventeen MALE grandchildren reside? Probably not.

Selfishly, I like him here, just down the street in the towers, dropping in often; in his iconic linguistic style, doggedly asking us to exchange our good cheer for hard cash for him.

Was Rafael ever a "card-carrying" Catholic Worker? ALWAYS ... in his own way. ☪

HANCOCK 38 UPDATE

The trial of the Hancock 38 is over, except for the verdict, which will be rendered at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 1, in Dewitt Town Court. Judge Gideon allowed us to present a defense based on international law and allowed former Attorney General Ramsey Clark to testify for several hours about the Nuremburg Principles, the obligation of citizens to take nonviolent action against war crimes under those principles, and his judgment that drone killings violate international law. Closing arguments (including that of Harry Murray) are viewable on YouTube or at the Syracuse Peace Council website: www.peacecouncil.net.

Bread for All



This year we are baking Pumpkin and Sweet Potato Pies. Each 9-inch pie is made from scratch with a butter crust, farm fresh eggs, and organic pumpkins or sweet potatoes. \$10 Cash or check made out to St. Joe's Bakery Project.

Orders will be accepted until 11/20/2011 by calling Bread for All, 775-9135.

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

Volunteer Opportunity

Help Staff the Night Shelter.

Will Train.

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Plenty of choice hours.

Good supervision.

Call Tom at 232-3262.

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.

11-15 Sr. Grace Miller	12-20 Rev. Joann Kaiser
11-22 Fr. Bob Werth	12-27 Rev. Chava Redonnet
11-29 Rev. Lawrence Hargrave	1-3 Pastor Marc Edbujar
12-6 Donna Ecker (from Bethany House)	1-10 Pastor Thomas Felton
12-13 Deacon Bill Coffee	1-17 Chris Phillips
	1-24 Sr. Grace Miller