

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

March 2012

Volume 36, No. 1

The Rachel Corrie Project by David Goodner and Megan Felt

Follow your dreams, believe in yourself and don't give up.

I feel like I'm witnessing the systematic destruction of a people's ability to survive. It's horrifying.

Sometimes I sit down to dinner with people and I realize there is a massive military machine surrounding us, trying to kill the people I'm having dinner with.

We are protecting civilians. We are unarmed. We are no threat to you. Please do not shoot.

We should be inspired by people... who show that human beings can be kind, brave, generous, beautiful, strong – even in the most difficult circumstances.

—Rachel Corrie

The Des Moines Catholic Worker is working to begin a new ministry in honor of Rachel Corrie – the 23 year old American who was run over and killed by an Israeli bulldozer on May 16, 2003 while trying to prevent the home demolition of two Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip.

Our aim is to contribute in a regular way to international solidarity movements in Central and South America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia by sending community members on a regular basis to volunteer with nonviolent protective accompaniment organizations like the International Solidarity Movement, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Michigan Peace Teams,



Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Justice and Peace, Witness for Peace, and more.

Our immediate goals for the Rachel Corrie Project are to:

1) Stand in solidarity with everyday people across the globe under foreign military occupation by providing direct material support to indigenous nonviolent popular resistance movements.

2) Train Des Moines Catholic Workers in new forms of nonviolent direct action, protective accompaniment, human rights, international law, history, culture, faith, and language, and the role of US imperialism around the world.

3) Educate our local community back here at home about the human rights issues facing many of the world's peoples.

4) Change US foreign policy by building a social movement dedicated to

peace and justice and powerful enough to dismantle the US empire.

5) Provide a sanctuary for international solidarity activists from other organizations to recover mentally, spiritually, and physically after an intense, potentially traumatic experience in a warzone.

In providing a space for their healing and the dissemination of their experience through writing and speaking tours, we hope to, in a small way, make this work more attainable and sustainable.

We roll out a full proposal by this summer and have the necessary funding in place to begin this project no later than January 1, 2013. Luckily, estimated costs are relatively low, between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year.

The Rachel Corrie Project will not interfere

with our other ministries, like the soup kitchen and drop-in center we run over at the Bishop Dingman house, where we open up our doors five days a week to serve the poor and homeless living in the Riverbend neighborhood on the blighted near-north side of Des Moines.

Our community members will also continue to spend their time pursuing urban farming, community organizing, social justice activism, and nonviolent popular resistance to war and empire. And of course, we continue to give away tons of fresh produce to nearly one hundred immigrant families during our "Free Food Store" every Saturday at Trinity United Methodist Church down the street.

But we've been blessed with an influx of four new prospective community members this year, thanks in large part to our work supporting Occupy Des Moines – the local offshoot of the Occupy Wall Street movement – and it seemed only fitting that we expand the scope of our work since we feel confident that we have the capacity to do so.

As we mentioned in our last issue, we celebrated our 35th anniversary last August in part by renaming the Lazarus House the "Rachel Corrie

We met with Rachel's parents—Cindy and Craig Corrie—twice this Fall to solicit feedback and input from them about our ideas.

Cindy and Craig Corrie are the founders of the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Freedom, a nonprofit foundation whose mission is "to conduct and support programs that foster connections between people that build understanding, respect, and appreciation for differences, and that promote cooperation within and between local and global communities.

The foundation encourages and supports grassroots efforts in pursuit of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice, which we view as essential to world peace."

info@rachelcorriefoundation.org

House."

We're excited about the possibilities this new project offers for us to contribute in some small way to the international movement for peace and justice.

Also inside this issue:

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Page Four: Christ in the Breadline by Greg and Elizabeth Schmick

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Page Eleven—Poetry is the Means and the Ends by Renee Espeland

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM), is a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the Israeli apartheid in Palestine by using nonviolent, direct action methods and principles. Founded by a small group of primarily Palestinian and Israeli activists in August, 2001, ISM aims to support and strengthen the Palestinian popular resistance by providing the Palestinian people with two resources, international solidarity and an international voice with which to nonviolently resist an overwhelming military occupation force.

via pacis

c/o Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines, IA 50305
515-243-0765

Editor and Designer

Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Assistant Editor and Layout

Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Subscriptions

Via Pacis is published quarterly. How to subscribe: mail, email, or phone your name and address to the editor.

Photos and Illustrations

Unless noted (or we goofed), all photos and art are produced by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

Becoming a Des Moines Catholic Worker

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our web site.

Mailing Address

PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

Bishop Dingman House (Drop-in Center and Business Phone)

1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765
Live-in community members: Ed Bloomer, Austin Youmans, Gil Landolt, Tommy Schmitz, Greg and Elizabeth Schmick

Phil Berrigan House (Autonomous and Sister with the DMCW)

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781;
frank.cordaro@gmail.com
Live-in community members: Frank Cordaro
Live-in resident: Bob Cook

Viola Liuzzo House

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-401-4197
Live-in community members: Renee Espeland, Dan Hughes, Frankie Hughes, Reetzi Hughes, Norman Searah

Rachel Corrie House

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
Live-in community members: David Goodner, Megan Felt, Henry Wallace Goodner-Felt, Jessica Reznicek, "Downtown" Julie Brown, Ryan Laudick, Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs

Weekly Lectionary Bible Study

Mondays, 7:00 pm. Berrigan House.
Call to confirm.

Weekly Mass or Spiritual Renewal Service

Fridays, 7:30 pm, Dingman House.
Last Friday of the month is a Community Round Table.
All are welcome!

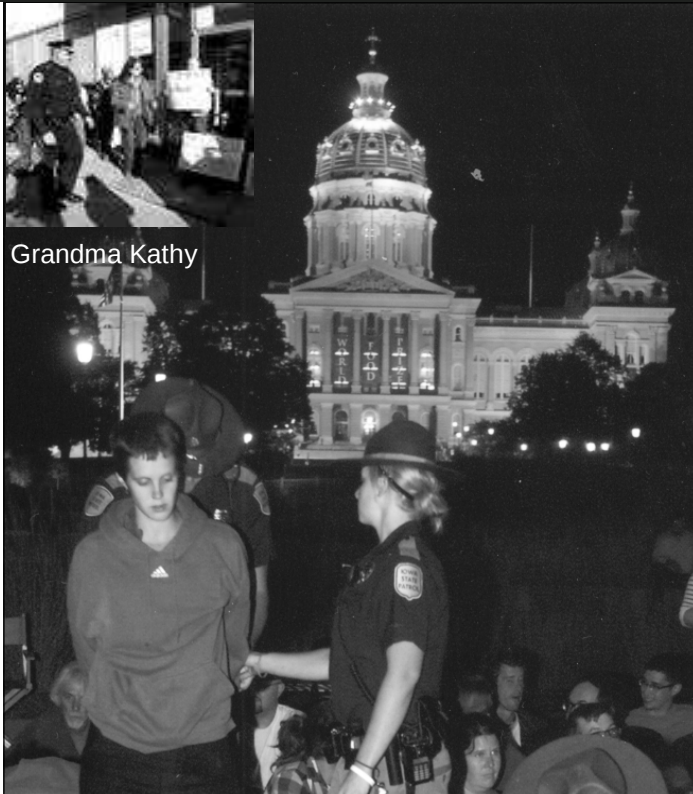
The Chiapas Project

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.

-Dorothy Day



Grandma Kathy

Megan Felt was arrested Oct 9 at the state capitol at an Occupy Des Moines protest. She was six months pregnant.



Henry Wallace Goodner-Felt was born at home at the Rachel Corrie Catholic Worker house on January 13, after just five hours of labor. Midwife Sheryl Puderbaugh is a long-time friend of the Des Moines Catholic Worker.



David Goodner was arrested on December 31 at Michele Bachman's campaign headquarters as part of the Occupy Iowa Caucus campaign, just two weeks before becoming a proud father.

[This is where the obituaries are usually placed.]

We are memorializing the OCCUPY Des Moines camp that existed at Stewart Square. So many people came together and organized to share meals, sleeping quarters, meetings, activism and fellowship. The city council opted to evict the occupiers because "city parks are not for camping." The occupants, the neighbors, and many in city leadership positions are mourning the loss of this blessed camp. Thanks to all who participated!

**Des Moines CW****Prayer Service Schedule
Fridays at 7:30 pm****March**

2nd - Greek Orthodox Eucharist led by Richard Cleaver.

9th - Centering Prayer.

16th - Catholic Mass.

23rd - Mass TBA

30th - Roundtable.

April

6th Greek Orthodox Eucharist led by Richard Cleaver.

13th Centering Prayer.

20th Mass TBA.

27th Roundtable.

May

4th Greek Orthodox Eucharist led by Richard Cleaver.

11th Centering Prayer.

18th Mass TBA.

25th Roundtable.

June

1st Greek Orthodox Eucharist w/Richard Cleaver.

8th Centering Prayer.

15th Mass TBA

22nd TBA.

29th Roundtable

**We still need a
CARGO VAN
or
TRANSMISION
WORK on a
1994 Ford F
series Cargo
Van!**

**We are
grateful for the
donated
passenger
vans!
Still...the
transmission
is very weak
on the cargo
van that we
are using and
many people
depend on the
donations that
we pick up in
this van.**

Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat

The NATO-G8 summit meets in Chicago May 19-21.
Join Catholic Workers and friends from the Midwest the weekend
before the summit for nonviolence training, community building,
action planning, roundtable discussions,
prayer and liturgy, great food and direct action.

**"ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS STEM FROM OUR ACCEPTANCE
OF THE FILTHY, ROTTEN SYSTEM."
-Dorothy Day**

**RESIST THE WAR-MAKERS AND THE MONEY-CHANGERS:
STAND AGAINST THE NATO-G8**

White Rose Catholic Worker
2127 W. Devon
Chicago, IL 60659
773-856-0315

2012RESISTANCERETREAT@GMAIL.COM
WWW.2012RESISTANCERETREAT.BLOGSPOT.COM

Su Casa Catholic Worker
5045 S. Laflin St
Chicago, IL 60609
773-376-9263



Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello There!
It's February 3rd. I find myself looking out the window. It's snowing and I'm here looking at it. For a few days we have had sunshine and warm like days.

I could have gone on a bus trip, but we're short of workers, Frank and Eddy are spending time in jail.

We're short but I'm here, enjoying what I can, and looking at the snowfall. For some reason the snow reminds me of home, of being on the other side of Ray and Ruthy Dillings's home sliding down this large hill that was someone's back yard. If you steer your sled just right you could go to the bottom of the hill. They were good neighbors, along with Vie and John and along with Annia and Manney and the rest.

For some reason I'm also thinking about my bus trip to the National Catholic Worker Gathering in Las Vegas. The bus that I was riding in Nebraska went through one or two semi-trucks. We all came out ok as far as I know. A dog died after it got out of the bus. Sometime after the driver got

us to safety, everyone was trying to help in any way possible, because there was a thought that the bus would blow up. We were taken to a hospital and checked and given help, fed, we talked to the police and other people as well. We later went to the Red Cross where some of us slept and then caught a bus to Denver, Colorado.

In Denver, we went to a place to eat. I thought we were to meet people from the press and other people. I think I talked to someone while I saw a little of Denver. Often I thought about the office that I work in...strange!

So, I caught my next bus with the help of the driver. I sat next to him and slept most of the way. After other buses and other drivers I made it to Las Vegas, I sat a long time. Then after a long time I decided to try my luck and take a taxi and I made it. After talking to a few people about workshops and other things, I went to the Nevada test site. I recall it was my second time.

I learned to love the Native American Indian, I love

the music.

Do you know in Tama, Iowa they have a veterans pow-wow? You don't need to be a Native American to sign up and be a part of it.

A long time ago, Howard (who worked downtown Des Moines) escorted me along with others to and around Rosebud and Pine Ridge, the poorest counties in the United States. I got to go to St. Francis (named after a holy monk) we left things there and then went to Pine Ridge where we went to Chief Red Cloud's grave among monks and other people. We dropped things off at the school.

We went to Wounded Knee and stopped at the grave to pay our respects. Then we went up the road to Porcupine, to a radio station KILI to drop off more stuff. Then it was back to Rosebud and there I had trouble with the van. We got it fixed the next morning and took his father to work to get the house ready for winter. I had one "me" thing to do. I needed to take two young Native American boys back to

Tama, Iowa to the Mesquakie Reservation. It was before the Mesquakie casino was built and I made three more trips. I would take a trip back there, listen to the music, and read about culture and history.

I love pow-wows, even their veteran's pow-wows – sorry I am not a veteran.

We had a friend and guest that was Sioux. He earned a medal of honor and he died with a lot of friends who still miss him.

We need to get to our neighbors better as much as the people across the street and at the end of the street.

I work in a room called the office. I often call it the Bah Hum-bug office which is in the main house named "Dingman." I'm often in there from morning to the time we close, even when the house is not open. I also work in the hallway stocking food and hanging clothes.

Right now the hot items are large bars of soap, large white socks, underwear, deodorant, shavers, lotion, winter clothes, and shampoo of

any size. While it is still winter, blankets, coats, boots or shoes, hats and gloves are still needed.

Note: Don't panic or be in a hurry, you might get hurt. Take your time and there are other shelters too.

I'm thinking of others' needs besides my own. The world goes around better that way.

I thank you for your time.





Christ of the Bread Line by Fritz Eichenberg

Christ in the Bread Line

by Greg and Elizabeth Schmick

"Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of invisible and visible winged seeds, so the stream of time brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these can not spring up anywhere except in the good soil of liberty and desire."

The mind that is the prisoner of its own pleasure and the will that is the captive of its own desire can't accept the seed of a higher pleasure and a supernatural desire."

— Thomas Merton's
Seeds of Contemplation,
1949

As Elizabeth and I sit at the window and write our article, we watch snowflakes come to rest on fences and trees, quiet artists that soften the landscape and still some-

how sharpen the lines of limbs reaching for fading light. Next door, boys three years taller than when we moved in shovel their driveway, occasionally pausing in their work to throw snowballs at squirrels digging for nuts. This will be our last article for *Via Pacis* and we have spent much of the last two weeks looking for ways to put into words our experience at the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

Everyone that comes to stay here experiences something different. Some people experience a sense of family, others experience the camaraderie of social justice actions, still others a simpler way of life or a spiritual awakening. We are certainly experiencing many of these. One of the most challenging and rewarding experiences for us is learning to be servants.

At the Des Moines Catholic Worker, every moment of every day provides every community member an opportunity to serve. Every day, floors need mopping, donations need sorting, bills need paying, letters need writing, meals need making, bath-

rooms need cleaning, dishes need washing, and knocks at the door need answering. Most of us do not get to participate in all these activities every day, but every day these tasks and many more rise, like the light on the horizon, waiting to awaken our souls.

On Sunday evenings the community pauses as a group to read the Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker. This reminds us that we are but trusted servants and that "personal and social transformation should be pursued by the means Jesus revealed in His sacrificial love."

This sacrificial love expresses itself in "non-violence," "works of mercy," "manual labor," and "voluntary poverty." As Elizabeth and I immersed ourselves in this new way of life, we gradually let go of our own expectations and goals, our own perspectives and dreams; each day we emptied ourselves as much as possible into the work before us, believing as best we can in God and the sufficiency of His grace. We try to let self-

will pour out of our hearts without effort or force; we try to loosen our grip on self-interest, so love can pull it over the edges as we bow our backs over dishes and toilets, over mops and school books and bags of garbage, bowing, bowing, bowing all the way to the earth where we pick up the butts of cigarettes scattered across the bricks.

And in these acts of service, we find a personal transformation occurring. As we set aside the life we envision for ourselves, and use our talents and abilities to serve the needs of our fellow men and women rather than the interests of money, security, or prestige, God gives us the freedom to see Him face to face. We see Him because service frees us from the bondage of self-will; it tills the soil of our hearts so we can better identify with Christ, the One who came to serve (not to be served), the One who gave his life as a ransom for many, the One who took on the hardships of human flesh and the cup of suffering that his Father offered. As we abandon ourselves to God's grace and a

life of serving those whom society frequently casts aside, we are becoming identified "with all the others who are identified with Him" and this allows us to understand that His Love lives and breathes in all of us.

This week we find our thoughts circling around the bible story of Rahab, the spies and the walls of Jericho. We take inspiration from both the spies and Rahab, who, not understanding the whole story, willingly took steps of faith to live out God's will rather than their own, even when to do so required that they risk their reputations and their lives.

They were willing to serve for the sake of serving. While we seek to emulate Rahab, we also recognize ourselves in Jericho, a city that worshipped false idols, because how often have our own hearts worshiped financial security and comfort, how often have we spent our time and talents in the service of our own self-will rather than in service of God and our neighbors.

Like the walls surrounding Jericho, we realize that walls of fear often surround our own hearts making us prisoners of our own pleasure and captives of our own desire. No wonder we can't accept the seeds of a higher pleasure or supernatural desire. Thankfully, though, this is changing – the walls imprisoning us in our own self-interest crack and crumble with each act of service and as they fall, the Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker become more than words, more than actions, more than a calling – they become an expression of our realization that Christ left himself in two places: the Eucharist and in the Bread Line.

Peace and Love,
Greg & Elizabeth Schmick

Editor's note: Greg and Elizabeth are leaving us after two blessed years so that Elizabeth can pursue her career as a community medical doctor outside of Portland.

Iowa: The People's Caucus

by Mark Engler

As caucus craziness reached its peak in Iowa, the Occupy Movement was not left out. The *Des Moines Register* reported in a notably favorable front-page story: "About 250 protesters from at least 11 states turned out Tuesday night for the first event of Occupy Iowa's most aggressive attempt to influence the presidential campaign. The protesters ramped up for demonstrations at the candidates' local headquarters

and the offices of the Republican and Democratic parties. They were prepared to be arrested en masse, and they were fired up."

Des Moines happens to be my hometown so I've watched Occupy DSM for months. The impressive strength and resilience of local activists there is one of the things that first convinced me that this could be a movement with truly national reach. From its start, Occupy DSM has had a hostile relationship with Republican Governor Terry Branstad,

known to Iowans, not altogether happily, as "governor for life," as he has lorded over the state from 1983 to 1999. Branstad added a fifth act to his reign when he won reelection as part of the Republicans' state-level surge in the 2010 midterms. He swiftly evicted the Occupy DSM protesters from the State Capitol grounds when they set up camp in early October 2011. That event produced some of the movement's first arrests outside of New York City.

However, Mayor Frank Cownie offered Occupy DSM a new space, which has since hosted a tent city that

has persevered into the Iowa winter. Occupy DSM has also maintained a good working relationship with the city police force. One of the interesting and impressive things about the local movement is how, even as its new occupation continues, it has moved beyond a sole focus on the encampment.

With the "People's Caucus," activists took advantage of the national spotlight by hosting a week of teach-ins and nonviolent direct actions focused on Occupy issues, most prominently the need to



Eric Hedburg and Jalan on New Years Day
"Occupy the Future New Year's Resolution"

get corporate money out of politics. In addition to scoring many press hits in the local media, Occupy DSM's actions made the national nightly news and the *New York Times*.

The Tuesday night opening event for the Peo-

Continued on page 10

Radical Hospitality And A New Heart Vocabulary

by Ryan Laudick



Ryan Laudick is an Occupy Des Moines and Food Not Bombs member and moved into the Des Moines Catholic Worker community on March 1.

To write what I learned at Occupy Des Moines is to admit I learned something. Of course we knew the world was ending. We were already keenly aware of what Charles Pierce calls “an accelerating sense in the country that there is no pea under any of the shells, that the red Jack is not in the deck, that the wealth of the country is being swindled and gambled and frittered away.”

To write what happened – the protests, the arguments, the daily grind of running a camp – would effectively ignore the symbolism of what we created. I cannot write all that happened, but I can write

what I remember. I remember deciding to get arrested and the accompanying mix of adrenaline and confusion and astonishment.

I remember being in the police wagon with a DJ, a professor, a Catholic Worker, and a couple celebrating their second wedding anniversary. I remember spending the night in jail with two amazing organizers in their 70s. Those are most of the important points for the first day.

To write what I felt, to describe not the cold nights but the warm hearts, is a different venture entirely. The cynicism that told me I knew a little of how the world works

bred an alienation that told me I was one of only a handful who knew a little of how the world works.

That alienation nagged at me: how could I speak up, start a movement, if no one was standing with me? Yet there we were, all of us, everyone yelling to the world what my heart had already been whispering. That immediate kinship shook off so much of that isolation and gave me brothers and sisters, compatriots and conspirators. I – cynical, sarcastic, angry, and ultimately, waiting, always waiting, never entirely ready to feel and commit and be genuine – found my heroes and my home. If home is

where the heart is then I've found my home is not a fixed location, but is a fluid place populated by these people I love.

All this has brought me directly to the doorsteps of the Catholic Worker to relearn this truth: I give with all my heart, but I can't learn how to use my heart without giving. I've been a man of many words, but my heart has no vocabulary. Radical hospitality, helping those who need help, is to me the most natural way of honoring the social contract and teaching my heart to speak.

I intend to show I have just as many surprises left for life as it does for me.

Why I Occupied Stewart Square

by Julie Brown

People ask me why I occupied Stewart Square and I have no idea how to answer that question.

I used to joke that I showed up just to talk and within twenty-four hours found myself sleeping outside. That's really kind of how it all started for me.

I had heard about Occupy Wall Street on the news but never really took any notice.

Being from an Iowa farming community, I had the general feeling that they were always doing crazy things in New York City. It wasn't until the protests started in Des Moines that I decided I needed to find out more.

In the early weeks it was so much easier to know why we were there. Everyone around me was talking about corporate money in politics. This was something I had always believed was an issue. Add to that a bit about the bank bailouts, throw in some good weather and a few tents, and there we were.

It felt as though everyone had the same message and that we were going to change the world any day.

Life at Stewart Square was easy in the beginning. The park was full of people camping, planning marches, and sharing ideas. There was always a crew of people cooking, cleaning, building and doing security. It's those days in the park that most people will remember. However, what came later, after most had left, is what I will remember for the rest of my life. It's from the hard times that few were there to share that I learned to love.

About a month into our occupation most people had gone back to their homes. Just a handful were left in



Jessica Reznicek and Julie Brown are members of Occupy Des Moines and moved into the Des Moines Catholic Worker community March 1.

the park. If you were to ask me why I stayed, I'm not sure I could answer, except to say that I had said I would.

My friend John asked the first week who was committed to staying through the winter. I raised my hand along with about a dozen people around me. I'm sure that by November he and I were the only two left that were part of that conversation. For the last few months, there was only about a dozen people trying to hold the park.

Several of the occupiers still there had been homeless before coming and there was a constant feeling of disapproval from some in the community. Fewer people would come to the park every week. Things got very tough. We no longer had time to help plan marches, coffee house socials or any of the fun stuff. Our days were filled with trying to maintain our occupation with just a skeleton crew. Also, without Internet, we were fairly cut off from the rest of the movement.

It was in these tough times in our weird little winter camp that I felt myself changing. The message of why I was still there became a little fuzzy. It no longer felt like we were changing the world. Every day it felt like we were

just trying to hang on. At night I would lie in my tent, looking at the ceiling and wonder why everyone had seemingly abandoned us, while also trying to define what it was about this I could not let go of.

One night it came to me while eating. I looked around our dining tent and realized that we had formed a community in this park. We were all from different backgrounds and lifestyles. Just weeks before we didn't even know one another, however, somehow, the few of us left were making this thing work!

People who didn't have a home before now had one. Everyone also had food to eat and a job to do. We were all working together to maintain our community the best we could. I realized that these people, no matter how different, were no longer strangers, but family. And I loved them all.

I remember telling a friend that the camp had a heart beat. You just had to be there and put your ear to the ground to hear it. That night I wrote on my tent wall, “In these spaces, we didn't learn how to camp, we learned how to live.”

I still believe that.

Occupy Your Heart

by Jessica Reznicek

Occupy Des Moines and the Des Moines Catholic Worker provided for me long-awaited relief from my own personal societal, political, and economic frustration. I began working with them in October of 2011, organizing protests and direct actions. It became self-evident to me immediately upon joining these communities that I had built barriers between myself and my ideals, morals, and emotions. These communities reminded me that I should never exist in a world in which my spirit is invalidated, suppressed, and undermined. I was reminded once again how to live in a community which thrives on love and support for our fellow human beings. I remembered that fulfillment is not generated through privilege, but through sacrifice.

When I heard of the occupation of Zucotti Park in New York in mid-September of last year, I felt a spark of life rekindle inside my soul. I was studying political science and history at the time, and had been becoming increasingly aware of the level of corruption fanning out across the globe. I have always considered myself an activist, just a lonely one. I felt as though my long-held, justified outrage was finally being echoed. People all over the world were finally standing up to the corruption practiced by government officials, scandalous CEOs on Wall Street, members of the European Union, the military industrial complex, those poisoning our water and food supply, and the countless other exploitative mechanisms that threaten both our earth and the humanity that resides upon it.

I had long since grown weary of not only working within, but also feeding America's broken political system in which 99% of the population are being victimized in the name of dollar bills. I had long ago become well aware that the weak-hearted and minded 1% of the world's population had been navigating us into absolute tragedy. But not until Occupy Wall Street did I realize I was not alone.

Since the moment of OWS's conception, I walked away from the life I'd slaved over to build. I abandoned without hesitation the routine that had strangled both my voice and my spirit. I left the house I had lived in for over five years and found my home. I became liberated from the powerlessness and emptiness that accompanied the constant maintenance it required to function half-heartedly in the world of designer clothes and clammy handshakes. My decision to begin anew magnified the discontentment I had departed from, and reminded me of the true meaning of my life: love and compassion.

I began at that point a process of personal transformation. My reintroduction to love is attributed to the people I met at Occupy Des Moines and the Des Moines Catholic Worker. I have finally found a group of thoughtful and brave human beings who have welcomed me into their tents, their homes, their lives, and their hearts.

As I become more closely acquainted with the Des Moines Catholic Worker community, I have found a group of people who dedicate their lives to servitude. This is achieved through expressions of love, peace, and justice...

Never again will I forget.



(Left) Megan Felt dresses as a "media puppet" during a protest outside a GOP debate. (Right) Jessica Reznicek

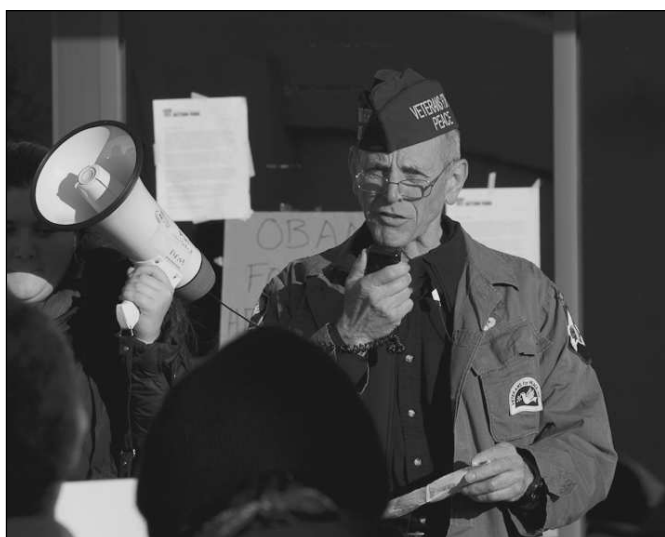


Chris Gaunt does indeed "Occupy Everywhere!" She remodeled the Federal Building!

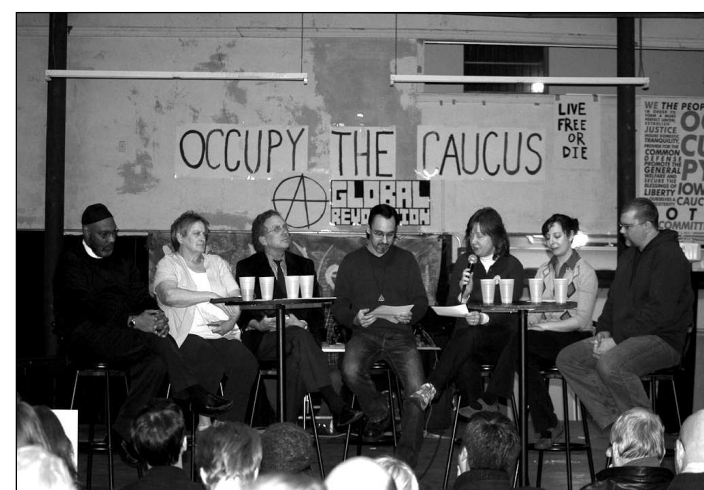
On October 15, more than 350 Occupy Des Moines supporters marched from the Iowa State Capitol to Wells Fargo and Bank of America to protest corporate greed and corruption on Wall Street, the corrosive influence of big money in politics, the foreclosure fraud crisis, and to demand a more just and democratic society that puts communities before corporations and people before profits. This was one of the first Occupy Des Moines mobilizations that helped spur more than five months of continuous organizing.



Father Peter Dougherty and Greg Kemppainen from Michigan Peace Teams led a couple non-violence trainings.



Elliot Adams, president of Veteran's for Peace, demands President Obama dismantle the US empire during an occupation of Obama's Iowa campaign headquarters. Pictured on the right is the local Des Moines Vets for Peace chapter President Gil Landolt.



John Nichols of the Nation Magazine along with Kathleen McQuillin of AFSC and Representative Ako Abdul-Samad at a forum comparing Occupy Wall Street to the civil rights movement.



Who the Hell planned all this biz baz? A Meeting every night forever? Talk about a learning curve...Shared decision making...Give, Take and Forgive...relentlessly! There are some real champs in this picture! Thanks to Everyone involved (even if you are not pictured.)



The old 504 Club and 3rd floor of 500 East Locust Street became HQ for Occupy IA Caucus.



Heidi and Brian Hynes from the Bronx stayed here at the Des Moines Catholic Worker and entertained the People's Caucus with a flamboyant musical number.



Occupy Des Moines members march in an unpermitted street protest on October 26 to condemn police state repression of the Occupy Wall Street movement after Iraq war veteran Scott Olsen was hit in the head and seriously injured by a tear gas canister at an Occupy Oakland demonstration.



Frankie Hughes occupying the Iowa Democratic Party headquarters. Her sign says, "I REPRESENT...children whose parents died in war; children who can't afford healthcare; children whose parents have PTSD; Children whose voice is not heard!!" On the back it said: "I AM...a homeless child due to foreclosure...an orphan from unmanned Drone attacks, ...POOR."



Renee Espeland, hooded and in an orange jumpsuit, representing a Guantanamo detainee, occupies the Iowa Democratic Party headquarters. In the background Ross Grooters and Frankie Hughes blockade the entrance with dollar signs taped over their mouths to symbolize how corporate money in politics silences the voices of everyday people.



Occupy Des Moines protesters occupied President Barack Obama's Iowa campaign headquarters on December 17, 18, and 19 to protest the National Defense Authorization Act, which provides for the indefinite detention of American citizens. Occupy Des Moines succeeded in shutting down Obama's campaign office for several weeks.



After a City Council meeting where many voiced disagreement with the decision to evict the Occupiers from Stewart Square Park, the Capitol House lawn dubbed "People's Park" was re-occupied. This is the march from the square to the re-occupation.

Why I Occupy

by Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs

Growing up in the 1980s, I felt early on that something was very wrong with the world.

Besieged constantly by images and messages urging me to aspire to wealth and a life centered around consumption and creature comforts, I couldn't understand the reason for the poverty and suffering I saw all around me – from the drawn faces and inflamed stomachs of African children on TV to the daily humiliations and violence that infected my school, my neighborhood and my own family.

The President of my country was on the record claiming that the poor were weak and selfish people who deserved their fate. Meanwhile, the horrific realities of the Cold War invaded my dreams with images of fire and destruction and death, while the President and other leaders, and countless average citizens in my own community claimed that the proliferation of nuclear weapons was the only way to keep our world safe. I didn't believe, *couldn't* believe a word of it.

Children, I have since learned, tend to have a natural clarity of vision and powerful instincts for love and fairness.

But in the course of our lives our original understanding of the world and our truest instincts about how we could live in it are slowly, continuously deformed and suppressed by the harmful social relationships our civilization pushes us into and by powerful cultural narratives that justify and normalize them.

There are many such stories, tailored to fit the various roles that our social system depends upon. A common theme through all of them – for winners and losers alike – is that we are powerless to change the system.

As an adult, although I never entirely lost sight of my childhood vision, I eventually succumbed, I now see, to hopelessness. I still recognized that our society was badly, hurtfully wrong, but I saw no way of righting it, no way of living in it that honored my deepest human instincts.

Thus, like so many of us, I turned inward, and my efforts in the world were mostly directed towards the attempt to acquire for myself enough comfort and security to render my experience tolerable, at least.

To make a long story short, I was never wholly successful, and I wandered through my life half-

awake, staving off the pain and fear and anger inside of me as best I could.

On October 9, 2011, I walked to the Iowa State Capitol building because a friend had called that afternoon to tell me that a group of people – about 500, it was estimated – calling themselves Occupy Iowa had gathered with the purpose of speaking out against the injustices of economic inequality in the United States.

Some would be risking arrest, he told me, by remaining on the grounds past curfew, and they would need witnesses and supporters. I was surprised by the size of the group – unprecedented in Des Moines, as far as I knew – and curious what they were about, and so at around 10:30 pm, I went to the Capitol to check it out, to observe and provide what support I could.

Something remarkable happened to me that night. There was an energy in the crowd that I hadn't expected and couldn't explain, a clear vision of a just and loving world that reawakened the child in me. Most importantly, there was a clear intention to act, to work together to change the world, and a belief that this was possible.



Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs is an Occupy Des Moines member who joined the Des Moines Catholic Worker community on March 1. He's pictured here under arrest after a protest at Michele Bachman's campaign headquarters in Urbandale.

I felt, for the first time in a long time, hope. As I sat down with those who were risking arrest, I felt connection, I felt the beginnings of a community.

Linking arms and joining my voice with the voices of others, with hope and love and fierce determination suddenly in my heart, I felt the hearts of others. I felt powerful.

Months later, I still feel it. The community

has grown. Many of those whom I met that night have become close friends.

Though I still struggle with my own pain and fear and anger, my own human woundedness, in community I find hope, I find strength, and I am far from alone. And now I see clearly that the world can change, that the world *is* changing.

Tick Tock Goes the Clock

by Dan Hughes

I fell asleep on the couch that evening and woke up at 3 am. I forced myself to get up and turn off the TV and I groggily stumbled through the dimly lit kitchen towards the bathroom.

Mission accomplished, I noticed on my return a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter on the table, so I grabbed a knife, slapped the peanut butter on some bread and started upstairs to bed while scarfing down my snack in the dark. I should note that we get good bread donated to us at the worker – whole wheat, multigrain, organic unique breads of different textures and flavors – and in the dark I could not figure out what kind of bread I was chewing.

When I turned on my bedroom light my question

was answered and I instantly went into a state of panic. I was looking at what was left of what once was bread, but was now a living, and breathing, furry, fuzzy, green, blue mass of mold. This monstrosity that had grown over and into what used to be great bread had taken total possession and was looking angrily back at me.

When seen in the light the truth set me free. I was no longer sleepy!

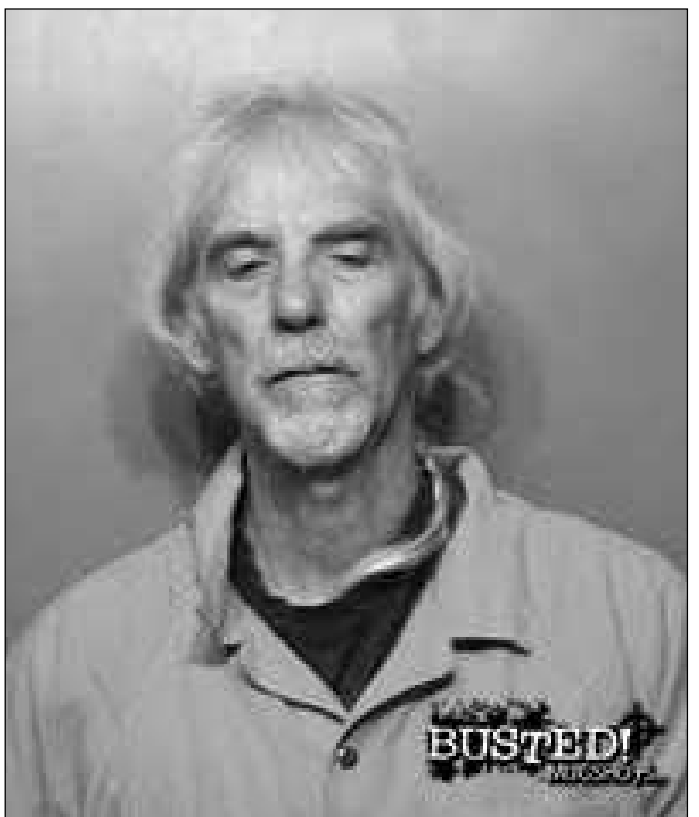
Slightly terrorized and trying to suppress an active gag reflex I bounded down the stairs determined to spit out (without losing everything although the thought crossed my mind that it could be a good plan) this peanut butter mold delight and started to vigorously rinse green chunks from my mouth.

I ran outside and threw the offending package in the

garbage, with the extra force required to let it know I really was serious and proceeded to call my wife Renee (on overnight shift at St. Joes) to say goodbye because we have had a good run. She assured me I wasn't going to die and said the worst thing that could happen is, if it were rye bread, I could be in for a few minor hallucinations.

Mostly, but apparently not totally, convinced by her reassurance, I went to bed and waited – my mind reliving the image and texture of the moldy fuzz bread in my mouth, which by the way was still inducing a queasy stomach – for what was to come.

What came? I woke up the next morning. So, let's recap. I KNEW I had good bread but it was moldy and I KNEW I had eaten moldy bread and was in danger but I wasn't, and for a bit I had a



Dan Hughes arrest photo

million dollar, fear-based, emotional and physical knee-jerk reaction to a 25 cent problem. I fell asleep, I have this story, and nothing hap-

pened. I think it is fair to say I took myself and the problem too seriously. In this case no one got hurt.

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OCCUPY IA CAUCUS

by Frank Cordaro

I first heard about Occupy Des Moines on my way home from the National Catholic Worker gathering in Las Vegas on October 9th, the same night 32 Iowans were arrested on the State Capitol grounds, four of whom were Des Moines Catholic Workers.

Since then, our community has been actively involved in Occupy Des Moines. Everything from setting up a couple of tents and spending nights, to washing the daily dirty dishes and helping with garbage removal, to being participants on standing committees and participating in protests and direct actions. I began by attending General Assembly meetings and sitting in on the Actions and Events Committee.

During those early days after Mayor Cownie stepped up and offered Stewart Square Park as an alternative site for our encampment occupation, the Actions and Events Committee started to think of direct action options beyond Stewart Square.

We were all trying to think of ways in which we in Iowa could help further the goals and issues surrounding the larger Occupy Wall Street movement. I started sharing with others what we did during the last Iowa Caucus season in 2007-08 with our “Seasons of Discontent: Presidential Occupation Project” (SODaPOP) Campaign.

This was a joint effort between Iowa Catholic Workers and the Chicago based “Voices for Creative Nonviolence” (VCNV). Our goal was to use direct action civil disobedience at presidential campaign offices to raise the issue of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Every four years, the national and international media spotlight shines on Iowa to cover the Iowa Caucuses. For a few days before the actual caucus night, the national and global political news media descend upon Iowa and we become the focus of the global political news.

Millions of dollars are spent by the 1% to make sure that the bought, paid-for and totally scripted political discourses from both political parties stay on message with the overarching corporate agenda of the corporate elites.

The idea of combining a plan of action similar to the SODaPOP Campaign with the national and international

“media buzz” surrounding the whole Occupy Wall Street movement during the last days of the Iowa Caucus made a lot of sense.

Calling ourselves the Occupy Iowa Caucus campaign, we set out to accomplish our primary goal – “to reshape the political discourse during the Caucus season around the concerns of the 99%” – through the use of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience. We invited the world to come to Iowa and join us in the campaign.

Our direct actions that included arrests began to add up. Starting on Monday December 19th, eight occupiers were arrested at the Iowa Democratic Party HQ in Des Moines.

On Wednesday, December 28th, seven occupiers were arrested at Mitt Romney’s HQ in Des Moines and three more were arrested at the Wells Fargo bank branch a block away.

On Thursday, December 29th, five occupiers were arrested at Ron Paul’s HQ in Ankeny and twelve more arrested at the Iowa Democratic Party HQ in Des Moines.

On Saturday, December 31st, ten occupiers were arrested at the “rumble” at Michelle Bachman’s HQ in Urbandale, followed by five more arrests at Newt Gingrich’s office, and three more arrests at Rick Santorum’s office, followed by one more arrest at Mitt Romney’s office later that night.

On Sunday, January 2nd, twelve occupiers were arrested at the Democratic National Committee’s “War Room” at the Savery Hotel and three occupiers were arrested at the Mitt Romney campaign stop in Urbandale, IA.

When you add the original thirty-two arrested at the state capital on October 9th, and 11 more at the state capitol on January 30, the total Occupy Des Moines arrests since October is 116.

“And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, ‘Who is This?’” (Matt. 21:12)

I have always wanted to do something like what Jesus did in Matthew 21:12 in Des Moines, when he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday where he led a demo where the “whole city” was shaken and was asking “who is this?” A good measure of how successful we

were at reaching our goal can be found in the following list of news stories covering our efforts in the Des Moines Register.

Dec. 20, 2011: “8 arrested during protest in DM...IA Dem Party HQ”

Dec. 28, 2011: “Occupy protesters make case for change...”

Dec. 29, 2011: “DM ‘Occupy’ protest results in 10 arrests”

Dec. 29, 2011: “Occupy the Caucuses group blocks Dem. Party HQ”

Dec. 29, 2011: “Occupy movement compared to civil rights movement”

Dec. 30, 2011: “14-yr-old protester among those arrested...”

Dec. 30, 2011: “Occupy Caucus protest of media”

Dec. 31, 2011: “Occupy protesters attempt to deliver messages to banks”

Dec. 31, 2011: “Occupy DM leaders thrust into spotlight”

Jan. 1, 2012: “Police arrest 18 protesters at three campaign offices”

Jan. 1, 2012: “Occupy protesters unable to meet with Democratic official”

Jan. 3, 2012: “Protests at Romney event, hotel lead to 15 arrests”

Jan. 4, 2012: “DM Police have spent \$75,000 on Occupy”

Jan. 4, 2012: “Occupy protesters say voices were heard at caucuses”

Many of these stories were from front page news, two with photos two days in a row.

Did we reach our stated goal? YES!!! We really did “reshape the political discourse during the Caucus season around the concerns of the 99%. Equally important was how we met our goal.

The first thing we did after passing the resolution to do the Occupy Caucus campaign at our General Assembly was to pass a set of non-violent guidelines that included a “No destruction of property” clause. We also agreed to be transparent with our process with the media and police. This was all done within a few days.

Admittedly, most of the Occupy Des Moines members had very little understanding of what a non-violent civil disobedience campaign might look like.

The idea of the non-violent guidelines was more

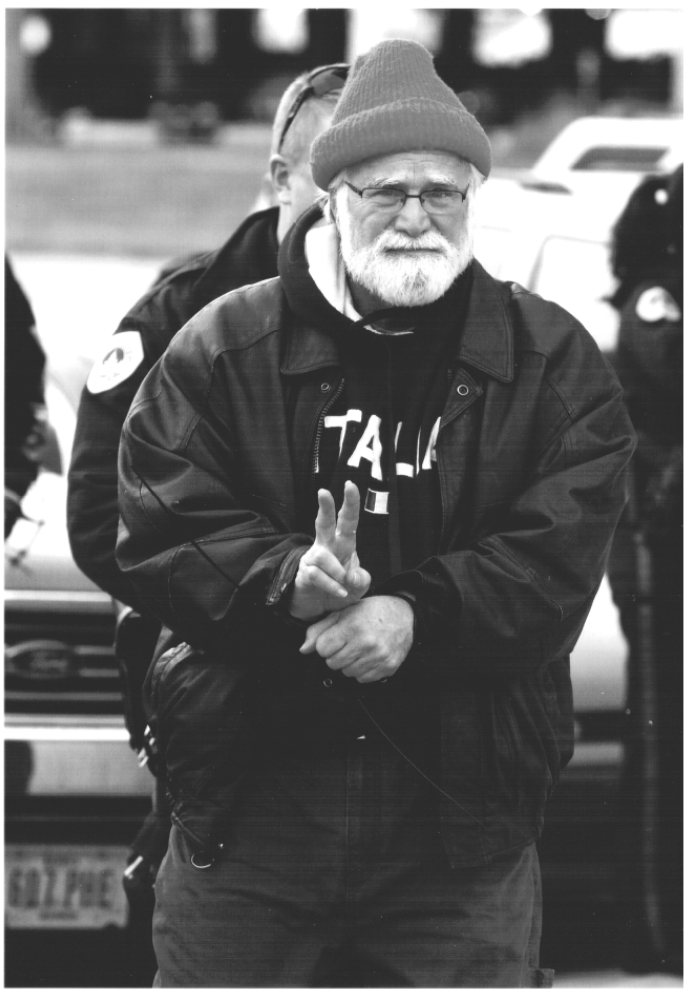


Photo by Des Moines Register of Frank Cordaro who received 30 days in Polk County Jail.

of a comfort to most than a practical tool for doing public protest. There was less understanding of what it meant to be transparent.

The first couple of weeks after the Occupy Iowa Caucus resolutions passed there were many discussions within the Occupy Des Moines community explaining to ourselves and to the larger community exactly what a transparent, non-violent civil disobedience campaign might look like.

At the center of this discussion was the Occupy Iowa Caucus “Working Committee” that met almost daily at the Phil Berrigan House. This committee was made up of 25 dedicated organizers who were the heart and soul of the campaign. It was within this working committee that any and all issues were fully discussed.

Two distinct traditions had a direct bearing on the style and nature of the planned actions. Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) and the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

Both groups have been in Des Moines over 35 years. Both advocate for social justice through direct action public protests. Both are non-violent in their methodology.

CCI is a state-wide membership-based community organization following the “Saul Alinsky” model of public protest. Loud and confrontational in style, Alinsky’s model is meant to empower people of lesser power to speak truth to the corporate elites. They protest to the point of arrest but do not get arrested.

The DMCW takes our lead from the larger national Catholic Worker tradition of protest to the point of arrest. Catholic Worker protests often resemble good liturgy and resistance is done in a prayerful manner.

Combining the loud and “in your face” style of CCI with the prayerful style of arrest worked well for this campaign.

What it meant to be a transparent campaign was an evolving experience. The first fruits of our transparency policy were having a Des Moines Register reporter embedded with us at our working committee meetings.

This made everything that was discussed subject to public disclosure. The most difficult challenge to our transparency policy was to the police.

At first when we were anticipating hundreds of people joining us from all over the country, full disclosure to the police made sense. We were not sure how many people were coming and if they would all adhere to our non-violent guidelines. Having the police in on our planning would help ensure our non-violent character—besides many of us who have experience in similar campaigns know that the police often have undercover people to get the info anyway.

As David Goodner was fond of saying “The police are going to be in our



Eddie Bloomer spent 25 days in jail for his witness at the Occupy Iowa Caucus actions.

OCCUPY IA CAUCUS continued from page 9

meetings anyway. Better to invite them here so we know about it than to have them just show up undercover.”

With just days to go before the week of “Occupy

Iowa Caucus” events kicked in, it was clear that the anticipated hundreds of out-of-state occupiers were not going to show.

There were people from plenty of states in attendance but only a handful from any one state. As I told a delega-

tion of police who attended our “Peoples’ Caucus” on Dec. 27th, “It is unlikely we will overwhelm you with our numbers.”

As it turned out, our lower numbers worked in our favor. Knowing that we were not going to overwhelm the police force, the police were far less concerned that things might get out of hand and they were much easier to work with.

Because of the trust developed between us and the police, the police knew that when we showed up to protest, there would be no destruction of property or violence.

They chose to follow a procedure where they would wait for the property owner to communicate a formal complaint, and even then allowed us space to make our statements before they initiated arrests. If called to the scene, they were not in a hurry because it was not an emergency—they knew that no one was in harm’s way. When they started to make arrests, they gave ample warnings and did so in full view of the media and supporters. In any good political street

theater, having a good exit has value. Getting arrested is about as good an exit as there is.

Towards the end of the campaign, when more and more occupiers from out-of-state started to show up, people started to question whether or not it was a good idea to keep inviting the police to our planning meetings.

For many, having police at a planning meeting is counter-intuitive. The police were not friends to most occupiers across the country; besides any chance for surprise was taken away when the police are sitting in on the planning sessions. Some offices were closing their doors and we were not allowed a chance to communicate with the candidates.

In the end we decided to stick to our transparency policy because it was working for us.

We made a distinction between the spaces we were occupying and the corrupt system we were protesting.

It was not important to hold any space. What was important for us was to find

places where we could put our bodies in opposition to the corrupt system that we were protesting.

In this regard, the police were doing us a favor by helping us set up this critical space where—in arresting us they were giving us the venue to take our protest to a higher plane—the justice system. The police are not our enemies. In fact, most of us see them rightfully as part of the 99 percent!

This model is not for everyone. I’m not sure if it could work for a larger city. What it did for us in Des Moines was to allow the full participation of the 99 percent; the news media, the local city government and police, city and civic leaders, and people from all walks of life. Everyone helped to create the critical space to achieve our goal. And it worked.

Note: This article was completed while Frank and Eddie Bloomer spent a month in jail.

PEOPLE’S CAUCUS Continued from page 4

ple’s Caucus was designed to mirror the experience of attending one of the actual caucuses. After some welcoming speakers, participants were given a chance to offer resolutions to the assembly. Unlike in the Democratic or Republican caucuses, these resolutions were not voted up or down for possible inclusion in a state party platform. But the process gave a wide range of speakers—including Occupy representatives from Iowa City, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Seattle—a chance to speak out in favor of things like nullifying the *Citizens United* ruling, reversing the National Defense Appropriations Act’s violations of civil liberties, “dismantling the U.S. military empire,” and ending Bush-era tax cuts.

While mainstream caucus participants ordinarily form “preference groups” to represent their pick of a candidate at the state party convention, in the People’s Caucus, participants instead formed “dis-preference groups,” choosing candidates they’d most like to protest.

Aaron Jorgensen-Briggs gave the opening welcome for the People’s Caucus on Tuesday night, saying:

“We have gathered here

tonight because the political system in the United States no longer represents the values of the American public.... We are here tonight to overthrow money-power with people power. We are here tonight as citizens and patriots to preserve our democracy from the corrupting influence of Wall Street and big corporations. We are here tonight to raise our voices in defense of the American dream. We are here tonight to restore the American political system and American society, to make it human-centered, not profit centered....

“Now is the time for us to lead, for the people of the United States, the 99 percent, to rise up, and restore America, to recreate it, truly, as a nation of opportunity, equality, and justice. Honored guests, members of the 99 percent, we are here tonight because of you. ‘Join Us!’ we cried, and you have answered. And for that, we thank you and we bid you welcome to the first-in-the-nation People’s Caucus.”

Mark Engler is a freelance journalist based in Philadelphia and a senior analyst with Foreign Policy In Focus, a network of foreign policy experts. He is author of How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy (Nation Books). This article first appeared in Dissent Magazine.

TICK TOCK Continued from page 8

The more I know the more questions are raised and the less I understand. 100 billion galaxies with 100 billion stars in each tell us the universe as we know it is a very large place. There is at least one of those stars that is a million times brighter than the sun.

I can’t really even wrap my mind around the number, let alone the intricacies and the power it contains. Whether God existing from all eternity created it or 14 billion years ago a big bang created every physics law and the raw materials to allow life to spring from nothing, on this little planet, a dot so small that it could not be seen from even one of those stars, my best logic dictates we do not, cannot possibly exist.

Yes, if asked on a quiz, which I couldn’t be because there would be no one there to ask me, I would confidently respond that I know we don’t exist because the alternative scenarios are impossible.

If my great intellect proves me correct on that quiz, please ignore the rest of this article.

Since I am still typing and you are reading this, apparently my logic fails on some level. Thank goodness I am not that brilliant, my limited mind can just not wrap itself around it. It means we are

alive! Yet the fact remains, that everyone who was born much before 1900 has lived their life and is gone.

Everyone reading this will be history and hopefully a good memory for someone in 100 years, many of us much sooner. We have a wonderful gift, this gift of life, but limited time and it will go by in a blink of an eye, like dust in the wind. That should be a truly sobering thought.

What are we doing with this limited time offered gift of life? This is a question beyond any monetary value. Do we respond to it with a 25 cent reaction?

Most Americans say they believe in God. I am one of them. If I can’t begin to grasp the universe I cannot put the God that created it in my own box and I have no chance to fully grasp the fullness of what that means. I will say that this has some ramifications!

Many folks claim to be Christian. Many claim to believe God came as human. If any claim to believe this, the question begs an answer: If the God who created the universe came as human—to this little planet—why don’t those who say that we believe this take the few things he said seriously?

Either believe it or don’t! There certainly appear to be disconnects in what we say and how we act. Most of us would be horrified to see the

little neighbor girl blown to bits in front of our house yet our own government kills children in foreign lands using high tech weapons and drones, and we pay them to do it. Can we rationalize taking another’s life “fighting for peace?” Can we vote for war makers? Can we hold the rich in high esteem, bail them out while neglecting the plight of the poor?

Why do we fit in so easily?

If our system contradicts what Jesus said is it not literally Anti-Christ? How honest am I willing to be? Anyone who is honest would say this system is wrong.

We should question our long held beliefs, assumptions and actions; try them in the court of “the least of these” to see if they stand up to scrutiny.

We should not be afraid of being honest with ourselves and others. We should be afraid not to. We should try to grow up.

Can we really believe in something and not act in accordance with those beliefs? We should evaluate why we are afraid of things. We have misplaced fear and we are hurting and killing innocent people. When I say we, I mean me. It is time to realize million dollar problems and stop gagging on 25 cent responses—times’ a’slippin’... Tic Toc.

Poetry Is The Means And The End

by Renee Espeland

"When the poet lives his hell, it is no longer possible for the common man to escape it." -*The Time of the Assassins, a study of Rimbaud*, by Henry Miller.

But take heart. As the saying goes, it is always darkest right before it goes completely black.

Rejoice in this: Seeds of futurity require the darkness within soil to dream.

"To go into the dark with a light is to know the light. /To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,/ and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,/ and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings."-- Wendell Berry, *To Know The Dark*.

Phil Rockstroh, in his article entitled *A Journey To The End Of Empire: It Is Always Darkest Right Before It Goes Completely Black* (<http://philrockstroh.com>) asks "What 'tangible' and 'constructive' things can a poetic sensibility contribute to everyday existence?"

Here's one: The atomized denizens of neoliberal culture are in dire need of a novel yet durable sensibility, one bearing the creativity and stamina required, for example, to withstand the police state rebuffs inflicted by the ruthless authoritarian keepers of the present order...as is the case, when Occupy Wall Street dissidents initiate attempts to retake, inhabit, and re-imagine public space.

Yet, while it is all well and good to be politically enlightened, approaching the tumult of human events guided by reason and restraint, if the self is not saturated in poetry, one will inhabit a dismal tower looking over a desiccated wasteland.

The crackpot realist's notion that poetry has no value other than what can be quantified in practical terms emerges from the same mindset that deems nature to be merely worth what it can be rendered down to as a commodity. The trees of a rain forest can be pulped to paper cups. A human being is only the content of his resume. The underlying meaning of this sentiment: The value of one's existence is derived by the act of being an asset of—in other words, "owned by"—the 1%.

Resultantly, the tattered remnants of the neoliberal

imagination (embodied in lofty but content-devoid Obama speechifying and the clown car demolition derby of Republican politics) spends its days in a broken tower of the mind, insulated from this reality: The exponentially increasing consequences (e.g., economic collapse, perpetual war, ecocide) created by the excesses of the present paradigm will shake those insular towers to their foundations, and, will inevitably cause the structures to totter and collapse...

To those who demand this of poets: that all ideas, notions, flights of imagination, revelries, swoons of intuition, Rabelaisian rancor, metaphysical overreach, unnerving apprehensions, and inspired misapprehensions be tamed, rendered practical, and only considered fit to be broached in reputable company when these things bring "concrete" answers to polite dialog--I ask you this, if the defining aspects of our existence were constructed of concrete, would not the world be made of the material of a prison?

If, in the words of Audre Lorde, poetry "forms the quality of light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change," then the verses written by detainees held at Guantanamo Bay torture prison—some originally written in toothpaste and others scratched onto foam drinking cups with pebbles, and furtively handed to attorneys as in *Death Poem* by Jumah al Dossari —are a most rigorous form of revolution:

**Take my blood.
Take my death shroud and
The remnants of my body.
Take photographs of my
corpse at the grave, lonely.**

**Send them to the world,
To the judges and
To the people of conscience,
Send them to the principled
men and the fair minded.**

**And let them bear the guilty
burden before the world,
Of this innocent soul.
Let them bear the burden
before their children and
before history,
Of this wasted, sinless soul,
Of this soul which has
suffered at the hands
of the "protectors of peace."**

Jumah al Dossari is a Bahraini who was held at Guantanamo Bay for more than six years. He was in solitary confinement since the end of 2003 and, according to the U.S. military, tried to kill himself twelve times

while in custody. He was released from Guantanamo in July 2007 without charge or trial.

Shaker Abdurraheem Aamer, a Saudi Arabian citizen and British resident, arrived at Guantanamo early in 2002. His alleged ties to Al Qaeda were based on his work with a Saudi charity in Afghanistan. His efforts to form a grievance committee succeeded, but days after it was formed, it was disbanded. He was sent to solitary confinement.

In his ironic poem, "They Fight for Peace," he struggles to understand his captors.

**Peace, they say.
Peace of mind?
Peace on earth?
Peace of what kind?**

**.....
Is it just talk?
Why do they argue?
Is it so simple to kill?
Is this their plan?**

**Yes, of course!
They talk, they argue,
they kill—
They fight for peace.**

- *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak*. D. H. Melhem; reviewed by Marc Falkoff)

Rockstroh continues; "As exhibited by the often bland, 'normal' outward appearance of a serial killer, when the apologists and operatives of an exploitive, destructive system appear to be reasonable, they can go about their business without creating general alarm.

By the same token, while many present day Republicans are zealots--barnburners raving into the flames of the conflagrations created by the militarist/national security/police/prison industrial state--Barack Obama and the Democratic Party serve as normalizers of the pathologies of late empire.

In this manner, atrocious acts can be committed by the state, with increasing frequency, because, over the passage of time, such outrages will have been allowed



Picture is from the 2nd International Islamic Resistance Poetry Festival held November of 2011 in Iran.

to pass into the realm of the mundane, and are thus bestowed with a patina of acceptability.

In nineteenth century Britain, the sugar that sweetened the tea of oh-so civilized, afternoon teatime was harvested by brutalized, Caribbean slaves, who rarely lived past the age of thirty.

As, for example, in our time, in our blood-wrought moments of normalcy, we trudge about in sweatshop sewn clothing, brandishing iPhones manufactured by factory enslaved teenage girls who are forced to work 14 hour plus shifts."

Can we even assimilate the fact that more than 100,000 girls are trafficked as sex slaves in the U.S. and that the average age of entry into prostitution and pornography is between 12 and 14 years old?

And to resist and recreate, a young girl paints insurrection when she writes;

**The old guys think She
fine, sends Them flying.
But while she on
That pole and smiling
Inside she really feels
Like crying. Thankful
The show is over she**

**Wants this to be
The end Because she
Doesn't have the courage
To face him again.
She gets raped but he
Feels great. She feels like**

**Dying cause too great
Is the pain within. So
One day they are walking
and she jumps
Off the bridge. And
That's too bad, she
Should've lived
'Cause man she's
Only 10.**

—printed in *Sojourners*
www.soj.net

Rockstroh ends his article by saying that **"That's just the way it is"** might be one of the most soul-defying phrases in the human lexicon. Contrast this with the OWS slogan,

"The beginning is near."

Hold both sentiments in your mind and discover which one allows your own heart to beat in sync with the heart of the world, and which will grant the imagination and stamina required to remake the world anew."

Let's resist together. Please! Poetry as resistance, resistance as poetry! Send us yours for printing in the next *Via Pacis*.

Pen your resistance
Comply with noncompliance
Send! Poems! We'll print.

Des Moines Catholic Worker
via *pacis*
PO Box 4551
Des Moines, IA 50305

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The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

March, 2012

Volume 36 No. 1

How you can help...

Prayers and Love	Food	Health and Hygiene	House-hold Supplies	Clothing and Bedding	Volunteers	Cash Money\$
Without your prayers and goodwill, nothing happens.	Fruit Vegetables Beans Brown Rice Whole Wheat Pasta Rolled Oats Meat and Fish Milk Cheese Butter Sugar Coffee Coffee Creamer Juice (sugar free) Salt and pepper Salad dressing Soups and Stews	Tylenol Ibuprofen Multi Vitamins Antibiotic Ointment Band-Aids Feminine Hygiene Items Disposable Razors Shaving Cream Shampoo Conditioner Lotion Deodorant Toothbrushes Toothpaste Toilet Paper Lip Balm Diapers Baby Formula	Bleach Laundry De-tergent Dish Soap Murphy's Oil Soap Pinesol Trash bags Brooms Rugs Candles Energy-efficient light bulbs Aluminum Foil Plastic Wrap Sandwich and freezer bags Towels	Underwear Socks T-shirts Sweatshirts Hoodies Coats Sleeping Bags Blankets Pillows	Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, clean-up), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance.	Cash donations are essential to pay taxes, utilities, repair and maintenance, purchase supplies, fund resistance actions, jail solidarity, community gardening and off-grid projects.
	Peace and justice books are always welcome donations for the Berrigan House Library.	Donations are gratefully accepted on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays, 3 -7 pm at the Dignan House, 1310 7th Street, Des Moines.				
House Repairs With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible.						



The Rachel Corrie Project