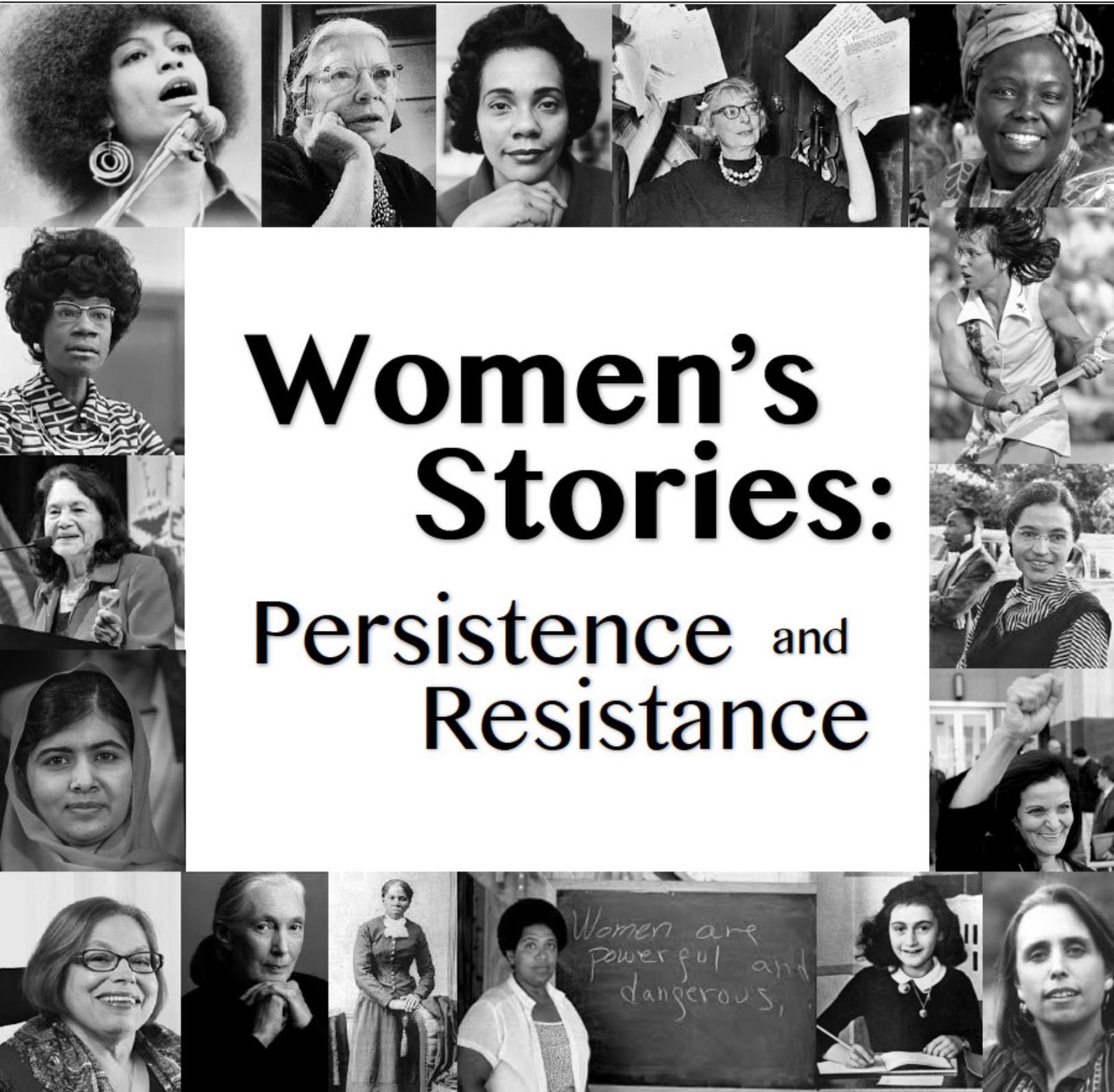


THE Round Table

Spring 2017

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



Women's Stories: Persistence and Resistance

Why This Issue?

“Nevertheless, she persisted.” On February 7th, Elizabeth Warren resisted the nomination of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General, reading Coretta Scott King’s letter of opposition on the Senate floor. What began as a condemnation of her actions, has since been re-purposed as a rallying cry. These three words have a ring of honesty that hits home as we continue to grapple with what it means to be woman-identifying in the year 2017. To be a woman in the era of Trump, to be a woman at a time where so much is uncertain, from crude campaign commentary, to recent attacks on women’s healthcare, calls decades of progress into question.

There has never been a more imperative time to highlight the efforts and triumphs of women. In January, the Women’s March drew tremendous crowds, a statement of hope and potential in an otherwise bleak political landscape. In many ways, however, the event generated more questions than answers. What comes next? How does that momentum continue forward? Whose voices are we hearing? Whose voices are we not hearing? How do we build solidarity across so many different backgrounds and experiences? What does a truly intersectional women’s movement look like?

Here at *The Round Table*, we have been wrestling with these questions, and continually coming back to the importance of stories as a mechanism for both visibility and understanding. To know a piece of a woman’s story is to begin to know her; her struggles, her perspective, her humanity. And it is through knowing that we are further called in to fight for, and support one another.

With this in mind we bring you this issue: women’s stories of persistence and resistance, told in their own words, from St. Louis and beyond. In this issue, Mary Ann McGivern gives insight into how her mantra of “saying yes” has afforded her the opportunity to stand up for good ideas. Roya Massoudnia discusses her visibility as a Muslim woman activist, explaining, “If you aren’t seen, the perception of who you are is in the hands of others.” Mandy Olivam brings a fresh perspective to the perceived tension of fighting for justice while raising children, commenting that “our children may be the greatest teachers in resistance and persistence.” Annjie Schiefelbein interviews Mia and Claudia, two undocumented women on their fears, hopes and anxieties as they look towards the next four years.

Kristen Trudo delivers an open letter to white women after the election, reminding us of the stark reality that 53% of white women voted for Trump. Maria Nash, age 16, shows us that we are never too young to recognize that “the differences between us, whether it be race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability, are not as isolating as we are socialized to believe.” Paulna Valbrun highlights the importance of dialogue and valuing all voices as more and more people find their way into dissent and activism. Mary Waters writes of her experience of public resistance as a trans woman, and the importance of bringing the struggle to others, “just like life brings it to us – in a messy way that’s often inconvenient, that’s often intimidating...”

Chandra Williams, a writer, singer, and new guest at Karen House, shares with us a poem about her hopes and fears for the country. Breanna Cussen Anglada from the St. Isidore CW Farm provides a great read on Decolonization and the Catholic Worker, and Darrick Smith gives us some updates on Karen House.

Each story in this issue is strikingly different, each a small piece of the greater puzzle. Combined with the voices of famous women activists in the centerfold, we are reminded that in ways large and small women are changemakers, advocates, agitators, peacekeepers, mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, persisters and resisters. We hope that these stories inspire you to listen more intently to the stories of women in our midst living the fight every day.

- Haley Shoaf



Cover: Sarah Nash
Centerfold: Greg Fister

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work. People working on this issue include: Sarah Nash, Jenny Truax, Greg Fister, Haley Shoaf, Ellen Rehg, Miranda Prince, and Teka Childress. Letters to the editor are welcomed.

Say Yes!

by Mary Ann McGivern

When I was young, there was a popular theme for little inspirational posters, “Say Yes.” I think I remember variations on that theme on walls in high school, the novitiate, college, and the schools where I taught when I was in my 20s. I think I internalized it.

I said yes to enter the convent, after all, when I was 17. I said yes, my second year of teaching, to drive two girls to deliver food to a destitute family, my first experience of real poverty. I said yes to working with sugar beet workers in Nebraska and then to being arrested here in St. Louis to protest Gallo wine on the shelves of 905. Then I said yes to Ann Manganaro to come live at Karen House. It’s all been invitation.

The starter questions Teka gave me for this article all have the same answer: Say yes.

In what ways did you have to resist and/or persist in the past couple of years?

I said yes to be on the board of the Peace Economy Project where I mostly do fund-raising. I said yes to visiting and supporting several men and women in prison. Then I said yes to being on the Criminal Justice Task Force for Empower Missouri. I said yes to joining my Ward 15 Democratic Club and voting to endorse issues and candidates and deliver literature.

From the morning after Michael Brown was killed, I said yes to showing up at marches and demonstrations and meetings – not all, or even many, but some.

As I think about it, I realize that for the most part I’m not the initiator. I’ve had a couple of good ideas I carried through, but mostly, when I hear something I know is a good idea and I can do it, I’m in the habit of saying yes. I’m 75 now, and saying yes is a habit I’m proud of.

What are your hopes and fears for 2017?

I am trying very hard not to develop and focus on fears. I could write a long “ain’t it awful” essay with the best of them. But instead I’m trying to resist hearing the tweet of the day and getting all hot and bothered by it.

I’m trying to understand within the issues of 2017 the opportunities to say yes.

I said yes about five years back to blogging for the National Catholic Reporter. I get to write a few hundred words every week plus some longer articles about nuclear weapons, risking arrest, racism, and an account of how Karen House has grown and changed over the past ten years. In all my writing, I try to say that my hope is in us, you and me. We have to understand the risks and dangers, like racism and nuclear war. But then we have to find paths through those risks and dangers, expressing our hope and our commitment to doing the work in 2018 too.



“Works of Mercy”
art by Ade Bethune



Mary Ann McGivern is a founder member of Karen House. She has a long and diverse career as a writer of plays, a cook book, many columns for the *Round Table*, commentary for NPR, reflections for the NCR, letters to the editor, and more. In her life and writing, she continues to dream the Beloved Community into life.

I hope we see more of each other. Yesterday I left late for Maggie Fisher's memorial service and then got lost, couldn't find the church. I never made it. I feel the loss because events like that give us courage and Maggie's life is an emblem of courage. If you don't remember, she directed the Interfaith Center on Latin America for decades. The people who gathered must have told great stories and I'm sorry I missed it. I hope I get to the next event where we sing and tell stories.

Getting lost on the way to Maggie's service is an example, I suppose, of what to fear. It is up to us to help one another find the way. I'm hoping this Round Table issue may serve as a road map of sorts.

What do you think we need to do to move forward?

I've set myself up for a simple answer to this third question: say yes and help one another so we don't get lost.

That's all I've got.

People are doing very good work organizing us – not just to call Congress and vote but also to be actively anti-racist; to demand the best of our police; to share our homes, to risk arrest. We should probably all get arrested more. We should bring bumper stickers back into fashion. We should wear buttons and be visible. Sometimes it is harder to be a single visible person than to get arrested in a group of 20.

Our task is to hold to our vision of the Beloved Community and live it.



Perspectives: Using the Globalized for the Localized

by Royia Massoudnia

Saint Louis has her problems. She coaxes you with the promise of a dream of the American sort, but just as you reach the cusp of actualizing it, she throws her long list of daddy issues with racism at the very top, in your marginalized face. She toys with your psyche, screams in your face to pull your boots on and tatters your self-image. Yet, you won't stop loving her. It's because you know you deserve to be in her good grace. After all, you are her, just as much as she is you. She may deny it, but know she is not whole without you. My name is Royia Mariam Massoudnia and I fight for a city's love who doesn't want me and neither realizes that she needs me.

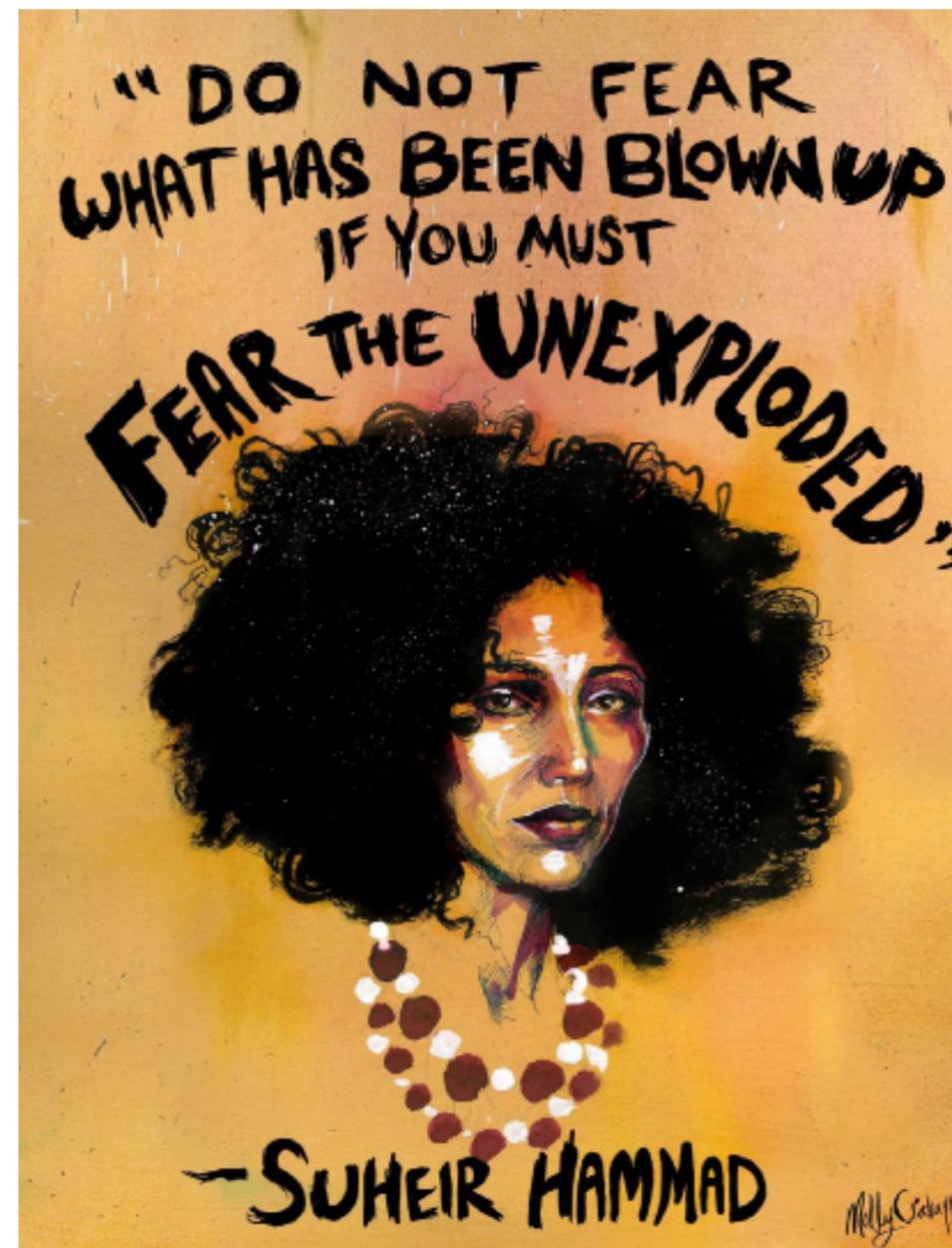
I am nothing special. I have work and school deadlines, I walk my dog, I try to use glass water bottles, nothing particularly revolutionary. The thing that I do have going for me is that dialogue is my jam. This World is globalizing and the only ONE true reality is that there are multiple ones. I use my story rooted in Persian protest

for freedom as my angle to both participate and listen in dialogue. I tap my scar on my forearm which serves as a reminder of a vividly distant memory of an Iranian resistance back in 09 that has forever changed and continues to shape every aspect of who I am and who I am going to be.

In a time like now in which fear is the driving political and social force, defining us as a community, reclaiming and buckling down on civic participation and sharing yourself with others has never been more important. The sad realization of the fear that so many people have of me, a Muslim, 1st generation American woman, hit home immediately after the Executive Order was signed by Trump. If you aren't seen, the perception of who you are is in the hands of others. I want to be a part of bringing a culture of intersectional dialogue to Saint Louis. I feel that us progressives need to start talking amongst ourselves and the plethora of organizations and people we



Royia Massoudnia is an HR Director by day and for the rest of her hours, a local activist and member of St. Louis Young Democrats, Communications Committee Chair For Mobilize MO, and Political Organizer for progressive campaigns big and small. She is also a proud Dachshund mom.



Original artwork by Molly Crabapple (2016)
<http://mollycrabapple.com/pen-america-protest-posters>

represent need to work on strengthening the realization that we have a stake in each other's resistance. I say this because if I know my struggle to be completely disassociated with Black Lives Matter, the LGBTQ communities and endless others, I will have actualized nothing but failure.

Right now, life can be extremely scary. It isn't the fear mongering rhetoric that has me chilled to the bone, but rather the possibility that if we as a people do not make a conscious decision to unify and celebrate the rich-

ness our differences bring to the American identity, we shall most definitely fall divided. I have come to understand the current sociopolitical horror we find ourselves in, not as a consequence but rather an ultimatum of what the face of this nation shall or shan't be. I want my paintbrush to touch that canvas.

What now? In an era and a time in which progress seems unlikely and hope is extremely dim, what is a progressive to do? This question was ringing in my ears like a fire drill alarm, sharp and never-ending. I can't say that I honestly know but this stellar gentleman Gandhi said to be the change you hope to see in the world, so I am going to give it a try. My globalized experience is something I always felt I needed my STL community to better know in order to actualize change. I now understand that I also have a lot to learn about the very community I strive to enlighten. Actualizing that I am also a part of this family, this great city and country is how I pave my way forward.

My involvement with Mobilize Missouri, a grassroots driven organization that strives to dismantle systematic racial and socioeconomic oppression has given me the privilege of humbling myself and learning about a city and state I thought I already knew. Coffee and conversations with friends across the political spectrum is now a normal part of my weekly routine.

Localizing my globalized perspective and using it as a tool rather than an op-ed is my way of trying to be that small change I hope to see. Community, dialogue and action are the three strands I grasp and braid together. Regardless of the knots and kinks, I rake my fingers through. I know that it will end up lopsidedly imperfect, but yet I still sit here braiding...



Resisting Cooperatively

by Mandy Olivam

I am a white, middle-class mother of two young children in Louisville, KY. Our city is one of the most racially segregated in the U.S. It is home to thousands of neighbors who are resettled refugees. It is a relatively progressive hub in a very blue state, but nevertheless represents a diverse blend of rural and urban culture and social concerns. It is where I was born and raised. And now, it is where my husband and I are raising our children.

In the initial throws of early parenthood, I found it harder than ever to show up in the ways I once was able for social change efforts. Meeting the ever-present needs of an infant and a toddler amid seemingly infinite clamoring justice needs felt overwhelming and defeating. It felt like I was turning away from a world of suffering when I was turning toward my children...or like I was neglecting the precious task of tending to my family when I made time for other work.

The central question I am asking myself these days is twofold: How can my family sustain ourselves for the long-haul work for justice while manifesting what we hope to create here and now? And how can the work we are doing every day help to promote the flourishing of other families near and far, as well as our own?

Luckily, I found other families wrestling with the same concerns. At a local natural parenting store and activity center, Mama's Hip, I met a community of people who

also wanted to directly address national and local crises for families - slashed healthcare, threats to immigrants, hate-mongering toward Muslims, and a rhetoric of hate that harms us all. We wanted to create a safe space where all families are welcome. We wanted to set an authentic example for our children. We wanted to do work that fulfills our personal calls and actuates justice. We wanted multicultural parenting spaces. And, as the needs only continued to grow more and more urgent, we did not want to waste time deliberating and despairing. We wanted to do something...together.

So, this past year, we began to create something that has never existed in Louisville. We are transitioning Mama's Hip from a for-profit sole proprietorship to a cooperative business owned by all of us: Mama's Hip Family Cooperative.

MHFC is working to become a place that runs on cooperation, not capital. Some families in our cooperative live in material comfort; some of us are barely scraping by. Each one of us carries both needs and gifts. But the fact is that, in a world

where patriarchal, white supremacist, classist, and ableist systems and structures are very much alive around and within us, people often only know how to respond to one another from a place of competition instead of in a way that strives to benefit all. In this dynamic, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable families suffer most. The families at MHFC have a willingness to respond radi-

cally by finding new ways to meet one another's needs, starting with just showing up and playing, working, and learning together...cooperatively.

ally by finding new ways to meet one another's needs, starting with just showing up and playing, working, and learning together...cooperatively.

Cooperators. That's what I want to teach my children to be in these times. Not money-makers, providers, breadwinners, or producers. Those are roles, not qualities. I don't want them to be for-profit, but I don't necessarily want them to be non-profit, either. I want them to thrive while doing what enables others' thriving. I want them to be sustained and supported while doing what is sustainable for everyone. I want them to see what intersectionality, anti-racism, and multiculturalism look like. I want them to taste, if only in moments, the true freedom of collective liberation. Especially in our volatile national and global climate, this is the vision of justice I want my children to see in action. It is a hope for their future. It is a way to learn how to resist oppressive systems and persist as people of integrity.

Since giving birth to my sons, I have uncovered a deeper awareness that all children are my children. At MHFC, because we each hold this awareness, everyone strives to care for each other so that no one is left to shoulder burdens all alone. We also collectively honor that our children may be the greatest teachers in resistance and persistence. Their fresh perspectives and keen questions awaken possibility. Their young self-awareness and eager assertions enliven our willingness to say "No" and to stand up for what is right. Each person is both a teacher and a student. Parents and their children are co-creators of our community and vital participants in justice efforts. Even in our struggles and imperfections,

we reflect the rich human capacity to be more collectively than alone. The bounds of our cooperation are only as limited as our imaginations.

"The days are long but the years are short" is a common adage spoken of the child-rearing, but it feels true about these times in which we live. It can be hard to believe that our small, daily efforts for liberation amount to much. Year after year, we fight the same fight. Decades of work can be swept away with a pen stroke of legislation; likewise, progress sometimes takes a seemingly miraculous quantum leap forward. Distress and celebration ebb and flow. Being a mother to my two sons offers me a daily practice to be intentional and patient, both with my actions toward my children and with myself. Parenting in community helps to hold me accountable for my actions and enables me to catch glimpses of the world my children can inherit. Holding the truth that this work is work for justice feels revolutionary.

What will allow us to persist? Creative spaces where we can meet one another's needs, celebrate the essential good of life, and set a practical example for our children of what the world can be. Collective resistance that leaves no one behind. Intersectional awareness that makes us kinder to everyone. Corners of the world where ordinary people are practicing radical willingness to do something new. Places where children are laughing and learning and leading the way. Places where our children, and their parents, can flourish. Places where people can taste, if only in moments, the true freedom of collective liberation. Cooperation. Community.



Mandy and her kids taking action against HB14, the "Blue Lives Matter" bill, at the Kentucky State Capitol in February. Selfie by Mandy Olivam



Mandy Olivam spends most of her waking hours crawling on stairs or outdoors in the dirt. She's looking forward to celebrating her kids' 1st and 3rd birthdays in the next two months.



Check out Mama's Hip on Facebook or at their website www.mamas-hip.com. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/mamashiplouisville>

Immigrant Experiences: Fear and Family

Interviews by Annjie Schiefelbein

Mia and Claudia are two very different women in most ways. But when I spoke to them both about their lives, passions, hopes, and fears as women with immigrant families, they were unified in their main motivation and message: family is everything. Family is unequivocally the most important thing in both of their lives.

For family, Claudia crossed the border with a four year old, a dangerous proposition. She lived in the desert, hiding from authorities and saving what little water and food she had for her son. She made it, and it has been hard, harder than she imagined it would be. Leaving her home country has brought more hope and far less despair than staying would have provided. The four year old is now 16, and has three younger siblings (Claudia's husband came across the border after she arrived.) Claudia is happy that her three youngest children are citizens, but lives in fear that she will be taken from them and sent back to Mexico with her oldest son.

For family, Mia works hard to be like her Father, who she describes as her hero and role model: "Everything I want to be." Her parents crossed the border before Mia was born, and lived in California for several years. Mia, legally a citizen because she was born here, sometimes feels like an immigrant. Growing up, she spent half of her year in the US with her parents, and half of the year with her grandparents in Mexico. She flows in and out of English and Spanish seamlessly. Mia's dad owns his own business, and has become very successful. Since coming to the US, Mia's parents have always paid taxes but refused any government assistance. It is a point of pride in their family to be self sufficient, and not take advantage of the country that is giving them these opportunities. Mia's dream is to own her own business "just like my Dad." Mia is so happy to be near her family; her parents and siblings all live near St. Louis, but she lives in fear that her parents will be deported back to Mexico, and that she will be separated from them.

I talked with both Claudia and Mia and asked them the same questions. They both shared their stories with



Thousands rallied for immigration justice in Washington D.C. on April 11
Source: <https://on.rt.com/lq3re5>

me, and they both talked to me about what it is like to live in the US in these past months since the election.

Annjie: Has anything changed for you since the election?

Claudia: Not really. You know, we always live in fear of being deported. People act now like the previous Presidents didn't deport anyone, but they all have. It is a little worse now because it's hard not to be afraid with it all over the news. We live and work and pray in the same town we have for many years. People know us, are kind to us, and trust us. I don't think the President will change that.

Mia: Yes. My Dad had plans that are now on hold. He was going to open a new shop, and he was also going to help me by giving me a loan to start my own business. We are now so afraid of them being locked away and deported that all of the money is being saved for a bond. So all our business plans are just on hold. My Mom has also changed; she does not go out the same now because she is afraid of being caught. So she just stays in the house a lot. Also it's hard because in my family, my parents have always been strong, but now they are depending more on us, because we are citizens. And it's hard to have

that change. We have had family meetings where we have an emergency plan based on one of them getting caught. We all have different responsibilities. It's terrible to think about.

AS: In what ways, if any, do you resist the anti-immigration beliefs and actions of some people in this country?

Claudia: I don't, really. We don't have much trouble with any particular people, and with people or places we don't know, I just try to stay out of the way and be unnoticed.

Mia: Reacting to people doing stuff like that is like putting fire on fire. So I don't. I try to protect myself, like when my next door neighbor is being terrible (Mia later added that he has threatened to call immigration and has also made homophobic comments to Mia and her wife). When he does that I try to stay calm. I still have to protect my family.

AS: Why do you think some native born US people have these anti-immigration beliefs?

Claudia: I'm not sure.

Mia: I think from the news. The news makes everyone so scared. It makes me scared too!

AS: What are your hopes and fears for the next year or two?

Claudia: They are both the same: I hope that I get to stay with my children, and I am terrified every day that I will be taken away from them.

Mia: I am so scared that they will throw away my parents. It is so scary! I hope they don't! Money, jobs: all that stuff comes and goes. But family does not. What is more

important than family? Nothing. So I put everything into that. All my hopes and fears are about my family.

AS: If you could talk to people who are from the US and have anti-immigration beliefs, what would you want them to know?

Claudia: That we mean no harm. We just want to work, live with our families, raise our kids, and be safe. We could not be safe in Mexico. My child did not have enough food in Mexico. I looked around and saw the possibilities for my child and all there was to see was violence, hunger, and desperation. There is no possibility for work or life there. In facing her child being hungry or falling into violence, what Mother wouldn't save her child? What Mother wouldn't do whatever she could to save her child, even if it meant crossing a border she wasn't supposed to cross? I would want to ask them that. Because any Mother would do that. No Mother would choose suffering for her child.

Mia: I would want to tell people we're not bad! We don't take your jobs, we do the jobs no one else wants! And we help this country SO MUCH! I don't think people realize that, how much immigrants help this country be better. I wish they could see that. We want to help, and we don't want to be any problems. We just want to work and live and be with our families. And that isn't possible in Mexico now. The economy is just broken. There is no possibility there. And I would tell people who were born here, who get to vote and stuff, to try to change these systems that break our families up. We just want to be safe and happy, just like them.



Ningun ser humano es ilegal!! // No human being is illegal!!

Source: <http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2013/05/social-movements-for-immigrant-rights.html>



Annjie Schiefelbein, now celebrating her 25th year with the Karen House community, is spending this Spring exploring her love of all living things, including her flowers, three dogs, "her" birds, and of course, The Force.

dear white women (who've said you love me) and the rest of y'all, too:

by kristen trudo

i wonder, these days, how many i love you's we've exchanged. how many times you've made me - and perhaps yourself - believe that my life mattered to you. i cannot quantify it. i don't know how many, but i know about the depth of my love. the quality of it, how deeply, in friendship and romance, i have cared for so many of you. even if being in relationship with you, on many occasions, meant never quite learning how to love myself.

election night felt traumatic. in a way i couldn't understand at the time. but which i now recognize as the feeling that comes with collective oppression. it was the recognition of the little power i had being stripped from me. of a gathering of rope being dusted off from the shed, ready to dangle some more black bodies a few feet off the earth.

i often wonder if that night would have struck me in such a way had i never met you. if i would have found myself in therapy just a month later, unable to manage my anxiety around identity and safety, and my understandings of community crumbling beneath my feet. because my community was you. had always been you, by virtue of both circumstance and choice.

so i'm compelled to believe that night would have been different, had i never walked through life with you, had i never trusted you. because you were the good white folks. and around you, i learned about putting my guard down, about blinding myself to racism and oppression, about quickly dusting off the microaggressions that soiled this skin that the sun loves to dance upon. because you, in my southern california suburban town, surrounded me. whether i wanted that to be the case or not. you, in my catholic high school, were everywhere. i was the outsider. i was the anomaly. the only black student in the classroom on far too many occasions. i was entrenched in your world, but you were god-loving, and colorblind, and seemed to find my quirkiness endearing: that i was a black person who didn't dance. who spoke that good



Reprinted with Permission Steve Truesdell/Riverfront Times

english. who was intelligent. quiet. had pressed hair and straight teeth. and i would laugh at your jokes about me being your "black friend" or about my "tan skin" or the texture of my hair. i laughed, because swallowed whole by your world, what other choice did i have?

when i felt uncomfortable i swallowed it. in the same way that your whiteness swallowed and overwhelmed me. i refused to make noise, about your microaggressions or your complicity or the fact that you told me i didn't "act black." in refusing to make noise, in normalizing the way you thought about me, i began to distort the way i thought about myself, and the way i thought about you.

you were those good white people. you would have been abolitionists during african enslavement, right? would have stood between rosa and those cops when they tried to arrest her? would have gone to jail if she

had to? would have sacrificed your bodies so that mlk didn't have to lose his?

what about malcolm? or rekia? or mike? or trayvon?

but, then, 53 percent of you voted for bigotry, racism, misogyny, misogynoir, islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia. but it wasn't you, you say. not all white people, you say. and, okay, maybe you didn't vote for those things. maybe you're just fiscally conservative and socially liberal. and you're just trying to keep your footing in this economic system that relies on the exploitation of black and brown bodies. maybe you literally did not cast your ballot for that man. but you didn't feel compelled to ensure that those who look like you didn't. maybe it was always more about preserving your image as a "good white person," checking the box that said you voted against him, than actually putting everything you had on the line to stop this "presidency." which is ironic, because now this "presidency," with incredible clarity, puts everything i have - everything i am - on the line.

and maybe, i've had something like ten dear dear friends throughout my lifetime, and something like nine of them look like you. so maybe half of my life's most intimate relationships have been shared with a person who did vote for him, or didn't feel compelled to vote against all of the hatred that foams from his mouth. maybe some of you didn't take responsibility to convince your family members not to. (and if it's not your responsibility to dismantle white supremacy, especially in your own backyard, i urge you to consider whose it is.) or maybe half of you still haven't taken a deep enough look in the mirror to realize that this is your work.

and my anger and anxiety is intrinsically tied up in the fact that i didn't realize this was your work to do, either. my anger and anxiety arrives when i realize how much i missed because of what you taught me about my blackness. that while i obviously wasn't white, somehow i wasn't black enough either. but that any more "blackness," and maybe we wouldn't have even been friends in the first place. in your words and in your silence, i learned to swallow the lies about what it meant to be a black person in this world. i learned how to hate myself - to strip away my identity - so that i could, to the best of my ability, fit into the comfortable narrative that you write about this country. and i learned to exist in a way

that mistook the teachings of your bigotry and ignorance as my own truth.

until now.

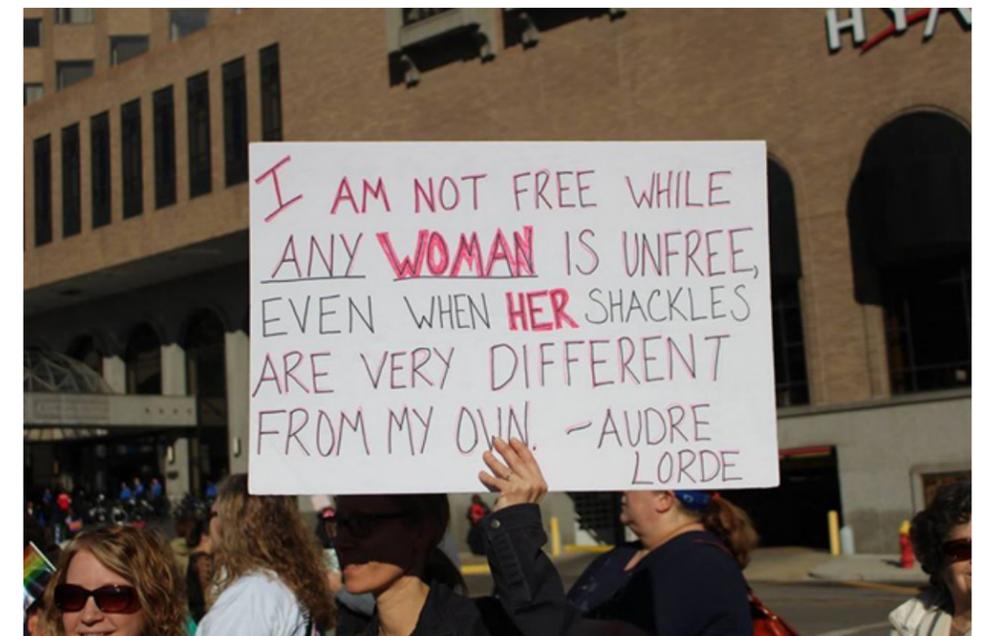
because leading up to election night, we were saturated with the embodiment of oppression. threatening - through policy and rhetoric - to burn our black and brown and queer bodies at the stake, and 53 percent of you believed it was worth handing him a lighter.

half of you were okay with watching my body burn, for the sake of preserving your american dream.

and now i am having to navigate these spaces with you. i'm having to learn how to manage my anger. how to not be swallowed, entirely, by the fire. how to not walk around dismissing you in the same way that you dismissed so many parts of me. because i've decided that i can have the energy to call you out, and to call you in, so that other people of color don't have to. because i realize that we will not be free until your "good whiteness" effectively stops the 53 percent of women who look like you. stops their bigotry. their hatred. their ignorance. their complicity. they are your responsibility. this is your work.

so white women who've said you love me - in some capacity, in any capacity - i write this to tell you that it is not possible to love me, that you lack the capacity to love me, until you choose to do the work to get me free.

in anxiety, in truth, in expectation,
kristen



Women's March in St. Louis on January 21, 2017. Photo by Jenny Truax



kristen trudo is a humxn with quite the creative bend, whose latest project, radically tender, hopes to amplify black and brown voices when it comes to the crafting of black and brown stories.

**Marsha
"Pay It No Mind"**

Johnson (1945-1992) was a drag performer, sex worker, and queer liberation activist who was one of the leaders of the Stonewall uprising in 1969. When the NYPD came to raid the Stonewall Inn, an important queer club in Greenwich Village, Marsha and her other lesbian, gay, transgender and queer siblings fought back against the police. Though her bravery at Stonewall, as well as her founding of STAR (Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries), her AIDS activism with ACT UP, and her decades organizing for LGBTQ rights, Marsha inspired countless marginalized people to openly work towards securing their right to exist in public spaces.

Movie: "Pay It No Mind: The Life and Times of Marsha P Johnson". Free to watch on Youtube!



"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."

Jane Adams (1860-1935)

pacifist, social worker, and activist. Jane Addams was a lifelong advocate of peace, social justice, and women's empowerment. In addition to being a key figure in the Suffragist movement that gained women the right to vote in 1920, she also co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union and Chicago's Hull House, a community in which the rich and poor lived together to learn, grow, and work to alleviate poverty.

**POWER
TO THE
PEOPLE!**



Q.U.E.E.N.

"True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice."

Laverne Cox (1984-

present) is an actress and transgender activist. She was the first openly trans actor to be nominated for an Emmy award, for her work on the Netflix show Orange Is The New Black.

"I am a person of color, working-class, born to a single mother, but I stand before you tonight as an artist, an actress and a sister and a daughter, and I believe that it is important to name the multiple parts of my identity because I am not just one thing, and neither are you."



"Even if it makes other uncomfortable, I will love who I am."

Janelle Monáe (1985-

present) is an actress, music producer, and singer-songwriter. She sings, raps, dances, acts, and advocates for the marginalized, whether they are fictional queer androids in her sci-fi concept albums, Black women who worked for NASA in the movie Hidden Figures, or Black Americans killed by police in her collaborative protest song "Hell You Talmbout."

Ella Baker, 1903-1986

Civil Rights Activist. She believed in that social change came from the bottom up, not from top down. She worked with, and helped found, many organizations that struggled for racial justice, including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the NAACP, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



**Women who
inspire us!**

from the Round Table Committee

"It is revolutionary for any trans person to choose to be seen and visible in a world that tells us we should not exist."

Diane Nash (1938-) was an

influential Civil Rights leader in the 20th century. Diane Nash, as a founding member of SNCC, was instrumental in carrying out the Freedom Rides that brought attention to illegal segregation in transportation in the South. Black activists rode interstate buses to raise awareness of racist Jim Crow practices that were prevalent in the South, as well as the daily racist violence that all southern African Americans faced.

"There is a source of power in each of us that we don't realize until we take responsibility."

Film: Freedom Riders. Free to watch online at PBS.org!

Angela Davis 1944-

present Author, educator and activist. Best known for being a member of the revolutionary Black Panther Party, Angela Davis has worked her whole life to combat oppression and educate others about the connections between racism, imperialism, and capitalism, as well as the resistance to all oppression.



"The challenge of the 21st century is not to demand equal opportunity in the machinery of oppression, but rather to identify and dismantle those structures in which racism continues to be imbedded."

Book: "Women Race, and Class" Angela Davis 1981

"In order for us as a poor and oppressed people to become a part of society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are going to have to think in radical terms. I use the term radical in its original meaning—getting down to and understanding the root cause. It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system."

Ain't I a woman?
-Sojourner Truth

"Human beings are so made that the ones who do the crushing feel nothing; it is the person crushed who feels what is happening. Unless one has placed oneself on the side of the oppressed, to feel with them, one cannot understand."

Book: "The Need for Roots" by Simone Weil (1949)

"Nobody's free until everybody's free."

Fannie Lou Hamer

(1917-1977) was a leading Civil Rights activist who grew up in a poor sharecropper family in Mississippi. After bravely deciding to attend a protest meeting in 1962, she decided to join a small group of African Americans who were going to defy Jim Crow by going to the county courthouse to register to vote.

"Sometimes it seem like to tell the truth today is to run the risk of being killed. But if I fail, I'll fall five feet four inches forward in the fight for freedom. I'm not backing off."

Simone Weil (1909-1943)

was a French writer, theologian, and activist. She lived her life full of compassion to poor and oppressed people—working in French factories to learn firsthand about poverty, moving to Spain to fight in the Anarchist resistance to the fascist regime of Franco, and helping political activists targeted by Hitler escape Germany. She wrote beautifully about God, spirituality, and rootedness.

Fannie lost her job and was driven from her home for this decision, but she was also solidified in her resolve to fight for voting rights of African Americans in the south. Though she faced racist violence many times in her life from the police and counter-protestors, she continued to encourage other southern Blacks to stay strong in the struggle. She advocated and fought for the political rights of Black Americans and women until she died of breast cancer in 1977, helping found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964 and the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971.

Persisting with People and Resisting with Relationships

by Maria Nash

As a sixteen-year-old, I, and the majority of my friends, fall under the demographic label, “teenager,” which often comes with connotations of being moody, naïve, self-centered, and uneducated. While it’s true that at my age, I haven’t yet experienced many of the joys of adulthood, like having a full-time job or writing a rent check every month, I believe that fighting for justice is a lifelong process in which we are all learners, and that the best way to learn from each other is to share our stories.

The first time I was exposed to and forced to wrestle with social injustice was almost two years ago, during the summer between my first and second year of high school. I had signed up to participate in a week-long, urban immersion social justice retreat. During that week, we spent our time visiting social service agencies and living in a house located in the West End of Louisville, an area I had come to know as the “bad” part of town despite the fact that I had spent virtually no time there prior to this particular week. While I have always been a fairly shy person, at this particular time in my life, it was difficult for me to even make eye contact with someone. In fact, it took a while for me to work up the courage to even sign up for this experience, and thinking back on it now, I’m shocked I actually ended up following through and going!

On the first night of the retreat, I found out that I would be working with adults that had varying mental and physical disabilities throughout the week. I was



Maria, second from the left, with her small group during CrossWalk 2015, a weeklong urban immersion social justice retreat in Louisville, KY. Source: CrossRoads Ministry Facebook Page

excited, but also incredibly nervous. My reservations included thoughts like “What if I accidentally say the wrong thing?” and “What if this is too far out of my comfort zone?” Over the course of this transformational week, I spent close to forty hours just hanging out with folks at a severely under-funded day center for adults with disabilities. Despite my earlier reservations and fears, I met some of the kindest and friendliest souls I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Although we were complete strangers, I was almost immediately accepted as their friend. That week, they were my teachers, and I learned a

lot from them. I learned that the differences between us, whether it be race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability, are not as isolating as we are socialized to believe. As I reflect on my own (rather short!) journey of resisting and persisting, I recognize this retreat as a spark that opened my eyes and my heart.

My hope is that we, the collective we, continue to have these eye and heart-opening moments. The moments that make you realize that we are all more alike than different. The moments when an authentic relationship is formed with the person you would last expect. The moments that make you realize that we are all called to stand up and be in solidarity with each other. I think that the most detrimental thing we can do as a society is to ignore that call. I fear a world in which individuals are so isolated from each other, that it’s easy to turn a blind eye to injustice. In my own experience, once I challenge myself to step outside of my own perspective, and I become friends with people who are hurting from injustice, I can’t just turn away. Although I am a young person who is still learning how to best resist and persist in society, I truly believe that when we build relationships with each other, abstract issues are made personal, and we are called to act.

Since that first social justice immersion retreat two years ago, my eyes have continuously been opened to many kinds of prejudice and injustice. Especially during this past election season, I realized in a very real way that many people continue to justify discrimination and that systemic oppression and individual acts of hate are becoming normalized. I think that right now, one of the most important actions we can do is to fight against the normalization of hate. The more integrated and pervasive something becomes in our society, the harder it is to fight. I know social change won’t be immediate, and I know it will be really difficult, but we must keep our eyes, our minds, and our hearts open to other people’s stories and experiences. I think this is best summarized by Thomas Merton, who coincidentally, had his epiphany on the same city streets that I often walk:

“In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.”

That week, and every day since then, this quote reminds me of the importance of building relationships and creating connections when working for justice. The solution lies in giving and receiving love from others, and from that, cultivating a better understanding of their experiences. This, I believe, is the best way to keep resisting and persisting in our world today. ✦



Last year, close to 2,000 young people like Maria walked through the doors of CrossRoads Ministry. CrossRoad’s vision is simple: Radical Relationships. Rooted in Justice. Reshaping Lives. Check them out at www.crossroadsministryretreats.org. Source: CrossRoads Ministry Facebook Page



Maria Nash is a junior in high school who spends most of her time hopelessly attempting to prepare herself for the inevitable abyss that is adulthood. Lately, she’s been worried about the rapid decline of bee populations since they pollinate all kinds of fruits and vegetables and support countless ecosystems.

Confronting Oppression & Resisting Trump

by Paulna Valbrun

The successful campaign of Trump has been difficult to accept, especially after having twice elected the first Black president. Although a troublesome presidency--that has already exhibited in less than 100 days that it will continue to violate the constitution and human rights--it has already provided the introspection that the United States has needed for quite some time. I plan on surviving the Trump era through relentless activism in various forms, such as marching in protests, participating in general strikes, and boycotting certain corporations. I also plan on--with the hopes of not sounding too sentimental-- survive the Trump era by practicing empathy and patience for others.

In my opinion, the makings of the Trump era began some years ago. It is also a direct result of the burgeoning apathy to the gross civil rights violations in this country. I became painfully aware of this ubiquitous apathy during the unrest in Ferguson in 2014 after the killing of Mike Brown. Protesting in Ferguson was frustrating for a number of reasons primarily because people that I loved and respected had misconceptions about the intent of the protest. Despite being depicted as a movement of thugs looking to cause trouble, the protest were always about the police brutality and racism that Black Americans experienced. This outrage at human rights violation in a supposed developed country was echoed throughout the United States. People from various backgrounds regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, or sexual orientation marched in the streets to protest something they saw as inhumane or unjust.

However, many Americans remained silent, incredulous, or simply apathetic to the gross civil rights violations occurring in their very communities. I connect this now because I was absolutely overjoyed by the dissent displayed immediately after Trump won presidency. The feeling of elation was short lived; I quickly felt ambivalent at the thought of how few supporters we had when it came to protesting police brutality against African-Americans. But now dissent and opposition to the way



"Listen to a Black woman." -Angela Peoples, pictured here at the Women's March on Washington in January. Photo by Kevin Banatte

our government works has increased exponentially. In my opinion, I think this is due to the flood gate of white supremacist, homophobes and other supporters of hatred feeling emboldened due to our current President openly making misogynist and racist statements.

It was very hard not to be livid or outraged by the sheer numbers of dissent now that a system was not working for other people. I was ecstatic to participate in the Women's March in St. Louis but there was still a part of me--as I looked around at an overwhelming white cisgender woman crowd-- that felt betrayed and angry. It was as if now that others could no longer have their seat at the table there was time to dissent, but not so much when it was the same case with Black Americans.

I was apprehensive about attending the March after



Paulna Valbrun works as a teacher's assistant at a school for autistic children. She also writes for the local arts "All The Art St. Louis."

listening to an argument presented by trans women and women of color who were attempting to explain how unwelcoming the March felt to a group of white women at a local cafe in St. Louis. Admittedly I was already exhausted and disgusted with the political climate of America so I put my headphones on and continued working on a grant proposal that was soon due. But I couldn't help but feel horrible and hopeless. I understood the anger from the women of color and trans women who expressed feeling left out of the march. I wished the white women felt more inclined to actually listen to what they were saying.

Some months later, I felt the same feeling of hopelessness when Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie conflated trans women's experiences by suggesting that they were somehow privileged because they were born men who later transitioned into women. This is certainly not the case for transpeople. Her ill informed statements and misstep to speak on someone else's experience was disappointing but it opened a very important dialogue amongst women and helped educate me on trans issues as well. As someone that is still in need of education on trans issues, I can try to offer some advice to surviving the Trump era.

I think that this horrible experience can either destroy us as a country or serve as a rebirth. I've attempted to explain my experiences with racism to white friends, and my experiences with sexism to male friends without much success in the past--and these were people who strongly identify as liberal or progressive. Now plenty of people are being emboldened, perhaps in different ways, but emboldened nonetheless to accept that racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia are very much a fabric of America, while some of us have become emboldened to show our true colors as racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or Islamophobic. These two very real unveilings do not have to be as complex, destructive or violent as some may think. Sometimes this may mean arguing at a local cafe with people who refuse to believe that they are racist or hold any prejudices towards other minorities because they are women, or sometimes it may include sending or commenting on a respected feminist's damaging comments on transwomen. Whatever the case, we have no choice but to face our various malaises dead on.

We have to confront hatred on all levels otherwise it will destroy us all. I suggest practicing compassion, patience, and relentless activism in various forms in order to survive the Trump era. That means trying to understand and remember that people are usually a product of their environment--I am not an exception to that--and engaging

in productive dialogue, if the situation permits it and if a person has the emotional energy to do so. I think the most important dialogues will occur with family members and friends that feel compelled to spew racist or sexist garbage. For example, I will not tolerate any hateful comment that works towards dehumanizing another group of people. I will calmly explain why hateful comments are ignorant, uneducated and embarrassing. One little comment may seem innocent and harmless, but having millions of Americans feel that they can say things that dehumanize one group of people creates a dangerous environment and manifestation.

As a country we no longer have the privilege of looking the other way or turning a blind eye to the racists in our families. If everyone did some of this work we would see progress. In Chicago, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) stormed a family's home and shot one of the residents inside. All of these people were completely legal American citizens. Students from Islamic countries were detained or denied reentry into the United States. At what point do we all start to become nervous about the direction that our country is headed towards? If the Constitution can be ignored and violated for one group of American citizens, i.e Black, Mexican or Muslim Americans, why stop there? There were so many excuses made when Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin and other Black Americans were murdered in cold blood. Now that gross civil rights violations are happening to other groups more people are aware of the hatred that seemed dormant until now and are dissenting, which is something to be optimistic about.



Photo by Sharon Menzel

Mutual Role Models: Queer Solidarity

by Mary Waters

Today was our day: the queers were taking over downtown, and for a few glorious hours I could feel completely normal on crowded, public streets. Honestly, as I headed south on 18th and Union Station came into view, I was surprised to see 4 or 5 full-sized trans flags being raised high, front and center in the crowd. I'm not used to a trans focus at queer events, and I'm not one to get near a spotlight. But today, I was glad for the boldest, queerest people there. We needed to make ourselves heard. I needed to pretend to be bold for all my trans siblings who too often suffer unheard. So I did my best to feed off of all their energy. And I would surprise myself that day. I would pull back my shoulders, puff out my budding chest, forget about the depth of my voice and let myself be big and loud and un-ladylike, powerfully, and aggressively feminine.

My friend Jade was helping to lead the march. She's a warm, electric person, great at keeping the power flowing through a bullhorn and into the crowd. I fed off of that energy, and I was glad for her example. As her deep, powerful voice led us in chants, her voice might crack but it was still strong as we all marched forward and chanted back. When I found myself in a pocket without energy I surprised myself and my friends and found my usually timid too-quiet voice shouting loud with swerve and rhythm leading the chants. If Jade could do it I could do it too. I rediscovered a way of taking up space that used to feel forbidden to "real" women. There was mutual inspiration all throughout the crowd as we encouraged each other to keep up the chants and fill in when someone needed a break from leading them. I felt new and powerful, I felt connected and grateful for the communion with all my powerful queer siblings lending me their confidence and helping me to find my own.

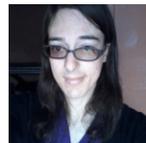
There was a moment when we went into the America Center causing a little more disruption than many in the crowd had been prepared for. I wasn't really prepared either but I pressed on. There was one woman I noticed in particular who was furious at us. She kept shouting, "There are children in there!" And I couldn't help but think in shock, "There are queer children in there, too – there are children, queer and not, out here marching with us!" We



The Transgender Pride flag waves high in downtown STL at the LGBTQIA+ March and Rally
Photo by Gregory Fister

are not a threat to children, and queer identities are not something to hide from our children – they are identities already developing in the hearts and mind of our children, right now, something to be embraced and fostered. There were kids in there? I'm so glad to hear that, I'm so proud that they saw how important LGBTQIA lives are to so many people right here in St. Louis. They are queer, or they have queer friends, and we have their backs.

That should've been the most stressful moment of the march right there, I think. I wasn't privy to the plans and disruption requires surprise, but we were supposed to take that anxious energy and turn it back into verve as we marched toward Soulard.



Mary Waters is a St. Louis native and senior at SLU, where she studies theology, classical humanities, and women's & gender studies. Those who encounter her in the wild will often find her ranting about politics, feminism, or trans issues. :3

My memory of what happened next was The Old Courthouse. I was on the right side of the street, and there was a large group of cops on bikes off to our left. I saw Jade near that group, I saw a group of protestors near her, I saw the two groups begin to get a little too close. . . There was a lot of energy, suddenly – I saw bikes shaking chaotically in the hubbub, I heard shouts, I saw a lot of cops making quick decisive movements. I heard lots of angry shouts from protestors, I saw that there had been an arrest and they'd been loaded into the car. After the police car drove off, I looked for Jade. Trans women of color, especially ones holding megaphones and daring to publicly display confidence in the opposition to a cis het patriarchy are obvious targets so I was worried and was right. I kept looking, and I didn't see her. I heard someone say what they'd seen the cops do to her. I heard someone say she was trans. They'd taken my friend. I know that she can be dramatic, bold, and angry, but, she's not stupid. She's a seasoned protestor, I found it hard to imagine her doing anything to warrant arrest. I found it hard to shake the feeling that she had been targeted – that by displaying her authentic self, she had lost the privilege that kept police careful to uphold the rights which should protect every single person in a protest.

I was crushed, I was done. When I asked my friend Greg to go up and ask someone to confirm what I already knew,



Amy Jade leads protestors at the LGBTQIA+ March and Rally
Photo by Heather de Mian

when I couldn't even look him in the eye as I heard him say "Yeah it was Jade," I knew the voice I had found before they arrested her would not come back. I would not be loud and proud and confident any more that day. We walked back to our cars, I stood and faced my car and thought about putting as many dents into its side as I could, but I didn't want to worry my friend so I got in the car instead.

Jade and I had been in the SLU Monologues the night before. We had both written powerful bold pieces about our experience as trans women, but I had punked out. I didn't perform mine and I regret it a lot. I texted our friends in the Monologues to tell them Jade had been arrested. I realized that we would perform nothing specifically about trans lives that night. I had already regretted not performing my own piece, now I was devastated. I drove straight from that downtown parking lot to buy some chocolate, then to the show. I listened to Transgender Dysphoria Blues, feeling like I must not be feminine enough because I wanted to cry but I couldn't.

I received hugs and looks of concern from all my friends in the Monologues. I felt ridiculous, I felt so overdramatic. Nothing had really happened to me. But I couldn't stop imagining what might have happened during the arrest, what they might be doing to her in jail, worrying they might put her in a cell with cis men drunk off the Mardi

Gras spirit. I felt selfish, because I couldn't help but imagine myself in her shoes. I felt like I was co-opting her pain. . . but being a trans woman is scary, and it reaffirmed fears I imagine most trans people have. So for the whole night, I bounced between worrying about her and worrying about me and feeling guilty for worrying about me and worrying about her again.

The relief when I learned she'd gotten out was immense. She met us later that night. I was quite drunk and felt like a mess, but I was surrounded by wonderful women who reaffirmed me and supported me and accepted me. When she arrived, our friend Anja and I listened as Jade told us what she'd been through. I won't go into too much detail, except to note that the police had actively taunted her with her deadname (her current legal name). Not all of us have the same relationship with our deadname, but, for me, I would've cried. Even hearing it used from a distance referring to someone else is enough to feel a stab of dysphoria in my chest. It seemed to me that they had been trying to break her down.

Anja and Jade blasted "True Trans Soul

Rebel," something for the three of us to shout and briefly take over the room with. We drank a lot and laughed a lot and tried to get our minds off of everything. I woke up hungover and grateful for all of the unearned support in my life. I drove home and replayed the last day over and over. And then I decided to write it down. I needed to process it, get it out of me. I was surprised that I was still so mad and scared. I hoped Jade was taking good care of herself. I hoped that she and all of the other trans people shaken up by insecurities and anxieties brought to the surface by her arrest are getting the support they need, processing this all as best they can.

If you're trans, especially if you're young, or you feel powerless, or you're too scared to come of the closet, or you're scared because you couldn't get back into the closet even if you wanted to, I want you to know that we marched for you. We were chanting for you. We wanted St. Louis to know the pain and chaos that queer people face every day, we wanted to bring it to them just like life brings it to

us – in a messy way that's often inconvenient, that's often intimidating, that's often irritating. And we wanted to let the establishment power structure see that trans bodies are reclaiming the streets and asserting our right to exist in public, that we are not gonna sit back and quietly let them try to legislate our existence away, out of sight, so that cis people don't have to think about us. There are people fighting for you, rooting for you, many of us praying for you, all of us hoping that life will be kinder to you soon, to all of us and that we're not to be feared. We're not to be ignored or brushed aside. We are not to be segregated. We are women, men, non-binary individuals, we are trans people who deserve the same rights and respects and securities as every person in this country. We will keep on marching, we will keep on resisting, we will keep on reminding the world that trans people face so many difficulties just so cis people can feel more comfortable, that the status quo hurts and, too often, kills trans people. Please: never, ever doubt that your life matters. We love you.



Women's equality is devalued I feel
Trotted under the feet of others
Of no importance to our government
How do you suppose we can grow any further?

Yet our cry so far too long
No results make for boredom
The inspiration is leaving our songs
Lord we're getting weak please help us stand strong

Our elders have been disrespected
The youth have lost sight of what real honor takes
But then how are they to lead a better tomorrow
If we keep making the same mistakes

Will God ease our load?
We can't continue on this way
Because our youth will be the ones who pay
For our mistakes, have mercy Oh God, I pray

My heart is melting, peeling, and torn
This is not the reason I was born
For when I first understood slavery was never my
identification
My heritage is rich--rich in greatness

The color barriers are so old
Just can't let the past go
Remember that was then when we were sold
Today I have liberty
Aren't we all the same?
But for some apparent reason
You have a hard time remembering my name

The essence of ones' soul is our great reward
Not the hostilities this world hold
To bring order is why democracy came
Civilization is what keep this country sane

Lock in on the worth of some
We fought long and hard to not succumb
For the fight of equality to enrich the lives of everyone
Let freedom ring is still our song

It's hard to see through the keyhole
For narrow is our perception
In order to see all of the view
You have to be willing to change position

So what kind of legacy will we leave?
What kind of world are we forming?
Is Life the greatest Gift?
Then who is the source of that Life?

The source of our problem will still be the same
God's help is what we need
Look through the keyhole and it will be clearer to see
That unless this government change its strategy
All the policies created will not improve the lives of
humanity
So the keyhole will cause us to see
I'm not pointing the finger at you
Examine our own reason
Let's pray for our democracy



The Keyhole

by Chandra Williams

You hold the key to my heart
Crisis and difficult circumstances
Plunge a hole in my life that pull us apart
My soul is vexed and my heart is weighed down
Unbearable is the pain when my eye gaze
Just to view black males stretched out in cold blood on
the ground

Our homes are empty and void of men leadership
Dysfunctional becomes a norm when mental stress is
how we live
Weary are the mothers for her load is too heavy
She lacks the security, understanding, and the support
system that was meant to give
The ability to plan, nurture, and correct
But what she gets in return is dishonor and disrespect

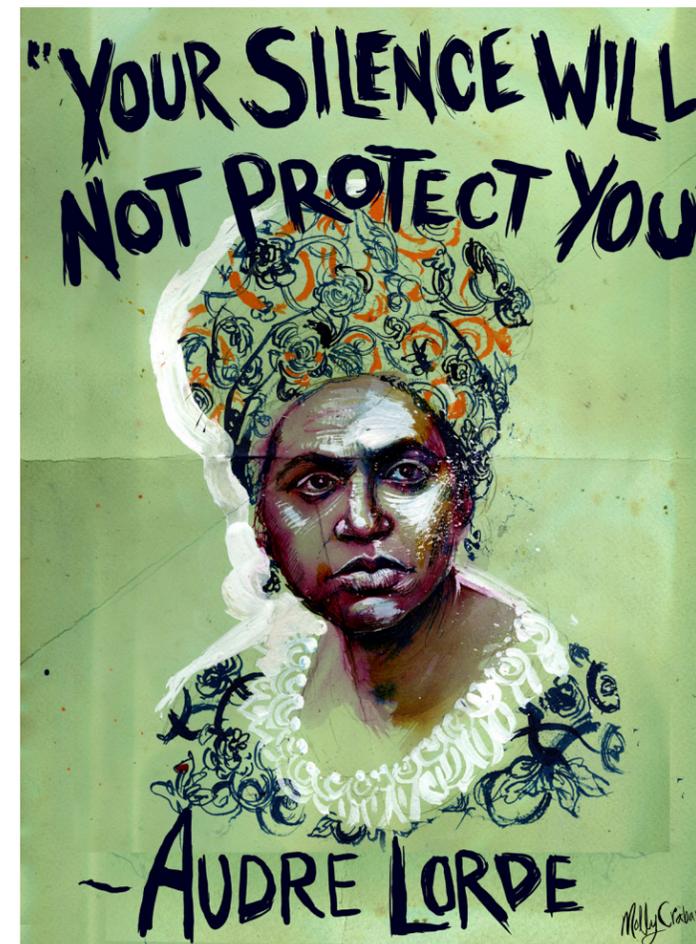
Tired of the backlash that pierce so deep
Our government is falling apart
Is that not obvious to see
These days it's hard to just get decent sleep

Stability is not the course we trot in this country
Failing is not what we embrace
But if the lives of humanity are not our main importance
Then greed, arrogance, and selfishness will dominate
our race

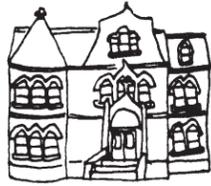
Tired of rehearsing this over and over again
Like a mole that just won't go away
Assured of the pain we face every single day
Let freedom ring is what we say



Chandra Williams believes that "Life is a never ending stream, its location is unpredictable."



Original artwork by Molly Crabapple (2016)
<https://mollycrabapple.com/pen-america-protest-posters>



From Karen House

by Darrick Smith

Karen House is a great place that does great work for homeless women and children who need resources such as food, clothing, and shelter. We also recently reached out to help transgender folk, who are more at risk for homelessness. Every day, dedicated volunteers spend time answering phones, opening and closing the house for guests, cleaning Karen House, and assisting with special needs such as certain requests. Karen House also breaks gender roles that help women to gain confidence on what they can do to help around the house, like bringing new ideas of structure so that we are not stuck doing certain things that keep our vision from prospering.

I have loved my time here and have grown so much over the length of my stay. Helping people that need support in areas that we can help makes me happy. Knowing that Karen House is here for the community and women of color and transgender folks is awesome. Karen House gives women and trans folk a chance to have a safe space, peace, time for clarity, and the opportunity to save money. During their three to six-month stay, they receive housing, hygiene care, clothing, food and any other resources available that we



Karen House in spring!
Photo by Gregory Fister

are able to give. In addition, a core community worker helps with special individual needs for each person.

Karen House helps to give women, children and transgender folk a place of solace in the moment of crisis. When their time here has ended, we hope that Karen House has been a great experience and a stepping-stone for them on their journeys. We also provide food for our neighbors that come to Karen house daily. We have many amenities

here for folks such as our computer room for our guests and a clothing room that provides our neighbors and guests with clothing. We get donations of clothing daily as well as food including sandwiches, produce, and sometimes volunteers come over and cook a homemade meal for dinner.

We have a small core community that does great work and dedicates a lot of our time to making sure Karen House is a safe and friendly non-transphobic place for our guests and core community. Karen House not only helps women, children and transgender folks, but

we also help our surrounding community. Neighbors help volunteer with food runs that happen weekly at Karen House. We continue to provide love and support to everyone the best we know how. I love the vision of the Catholic Worker at Karen House.



Darrick Smith is sharing his love for the animal kingdom with all of us by raising five baby chicks in an empty room on the third floor!



Catholic Worker Thought & Action

Decolonization and the Catholic Worker by Brenna Cussen Anglada

Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker and one of my heroes, knew what it was to be rooted to the land. His family had tilled the same piece of earth for 60 generations – “since the days of Saint Augustine,” Peter claimed. The French village that birthed him had kept alive many of the customs it had employed since the Middle Ages: sharing work and tools, maintaining the commons, and working with their hands. Maurin, one of 22 children, championed this type of communitarian ethic as one that negated the need for reliance on corporations or the state. Nobody knows exactly why Peter left France for the US (he likely was avoiding military conscription), but after a few decades of wandering, Peter eventually sought out a way to enact on a large scale his vision for a “green revolution” based on his village experience and understanding of Medieval history. He dreamed of lay Catholic communes who, like the Irish (“green”) monks of the seventh century, would practice prayer, scholarship, and cultivation of the land to create small, self-sufficient societies where it would be easier for people “to be good.” It was, and remains, a captivating vision.

For all of the beauty of his dream of defeating capitalism and individualism by populating the countryside with “back-to-the-landers,” however, Maurin, a European immigrant, failed to take into account the reality that the land he encouraged people to go “back” to had been acquired for their use through the forced removal and genocide of native communities, most of whom were still in existence and actively fighting for their survival. We in the Midwest CW have only recently begun to grapple with what it means to work for justice given the reality of hundreds of years of institutional racism. Might it also be time to look critically at how we have participated in the ongoing colonization of this continent, and what it could look like to repair the harm?

After visiting Standing Rock twice in the past months, and doing a lot of reading and listening to histories of this continent told from the perspective of American Indians, I feel that we in the Catholic Worker are ripe for participating in a process of “decolonization” for ourselves and for our wider communities. Some of the suggestions below are things we already do well as a movement, and I look forward to seeing the new directions they we take them:

A good first step is to learn whose land we are on and the specific details of how this came to be (Treaties? War? Forced Removal?) To combat the “myth of the disappearing native,” we can acknowledge whose land our communities currently occupy. We can also know our family’s history, learning about how/why our ancestors ended up on this land. Elaine Enns,

restorative justice practitioner and descendant of European settlers, believes that settler communities have been prevented from honestly facing our past because of intergenerational trauma. In her research, Enns has found that Europeans who fled their homelands due to famine, war, or other tragedies have passed on this trauma both bodily and communally, resulting in a “great silence” around the atrocities perpetrated by them or for their benefit. Enns leads workshops that help people navigate the story of how their family came to the US, and process how that history continues to impact current generations. She assists participants in learning the history and present realities of the native communities who originally inhabited the land, ultimately hoping that non-native descendants can begin to create relationships with our indigenous neighbors that are based on truth, and lead to repair. (Come to Enns’ workshop at Saint Isidore May 27-29!)

Once we know whose land we are on, and have educated ourselves about the history of the area and its current struggles, we can begin to ask permission to be there. We can also ask to join one of the ongoing Indigenous-led struggles for land and self-determination taking place all over the continent. The Catholic Worker does activism well! We can use our experience and our networks to support land return and treaty rights. It is also important to research where our water, heat, and electricity come from, as many such resources come at the expense of the destruction of Indian reservation land through strip mining, dams, and other extractive projects. We can collaborate with one of the many Indigenous-led movements that combat environmental racism, and invite collaboration in other justice work we do.

A request that I have heard from many American Indians for non-native people is to embrace our own traditions, rather than trying to “become Indian.” Descendants of European settlers, in the process of becoming “White,” have lost many of our roots. However, we often mistake this real longing for connection with the illusion that we are entitled to help ourselves to Native culture, an appropriation that has been a central feature of colonial oppression for centuries. As Catholic Workers, we can go deep into our own fertile tradition to stay grounded while we learn from and collaborate with others. Might our rich spiritual practices of faith-based resistance to Empire and communal repentance be put to use (as well as challenged and stretched) as we humbly participate in a process of decolonization?



Brenna Cussen Anglada lives in the Driftless Region of the Midwest, and is ecstatic about all of the new life - people, plants, and animals - blooming at St. Isidore CW Farm.

The Round Table

Karen Catholic Worker House

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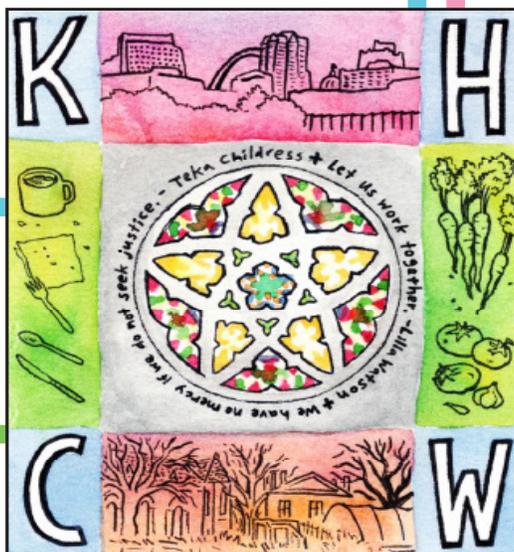
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“What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute—the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words—we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend.” –Dorothy Day



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Women on Front Cover

(Clockwise from Top Right)

Angela Davis
Dorothy Day
Coretta Scott King
Jane Jacobs
Wangari Maathai
Billie Jean King
Rosa Parks
Rasmea Yousef
Winona LaDuke
Anne Frank
Audre Lorde
Harriet Tubman
Jane Goodall
Judith Heumann
Malala Yousafzai
Dolores Huerta
Shirley Chisholm

We encourage you to look up and read more about these incredible women who have transformed our world.

Check KarenHouseCW.org for updates on Karen House, resources on the Catholic Worker, an archive of past Round Tables, and more! Our website has a HUGE trove of resources on racism, white privilege, and the Black Lives Matter movement!