

Why This Issue?

During the brainstorming sessions for this issue of *The Round Table*, the organizing committee kept returning to the idea of “journeys.” This is a much broader theme than what we usually do, but we were excited to see what stories the authors would share with us and with you, our readers. To start us off, Rosalie Riegle reflects on the journey of the Catholic Worker movement as a whole. (As much as she can with the 1000-word limit that we gave her!) She suggests that “there’s no such thing as a ‘typical Catholic Worker’ and every community’s journey is different.” Tammy Moore gifts us with her testimony, concluding that “because of her past, she’s strong enough for her future.” Melissa Brickey, a former community member at Karen House, shares with us how her time there “gave [her] the vocation that [she] has been searching for up until then.”

Marilyn Lorenz, a longtime friend of the St. Louis Catholic Worker, interviews Eliseo and Telma Ramirez about their journey to the United States from Guatemala in the 1980s. “One cannot take this journey without a very strong push,” they say. “It is a really, really hard decision to make. The journey is not easy.” Mary Densmore writes about her journey at New Roots Urban Farm and the many lessons she’s learned from the soil, observing that, “Where there is fertile ground, change is abundant and growth cannot be contained.” Mary Ann McGivern’s written reflections from her recent walk around Karen House’s neighborhood is brought to life in our centerfold thanks to Jenny Truax’s amazing map drawing skills!

Kira Banks writes about how the Ferguson Uprising shaped both her personal and professional life, stating that, “I am enraged it had to happen, proud of those who wouldn’t leave the streets, and honored to be a small part of the work—forever changed.” Jenny Truax uses excerpts from the *Close the Workhouse Report* to highlight the current campaign to close St. Louis City’s Medium Security Institution infamously known as “The Workhouse.” She includes the story of Jasmine Borden who was incarcerated at the Workhouse for over two months during the summer of 2017 because she could not afford to pay her bond. Sean Ferguson summarizes a 245-page report from the St. Louis Archeological Research Center about the history and cultural resources of the land where the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is currently being built. To close out this issue, John Heid shares some reflections on the refugee caravans in “Catholic Worker Thought & Action” and Carly Spurlock updates us about all of the current happenings at Karen House.

We titled this issue “Journeys: There & Back Again,” and Jenny Truax designed the beautiful labyrinth cover. The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that represents a personal journey to the center of one’s own being before returning back into the world. Because labyrinths are frequently used as meditation and prayer tools, I invite you to find some quiet time, maybe after reading this issue, to simply sit with the cover art, tracing the winding path with your finger as you think about and reflect on your own life’s journeys.



- Sarah Nash

Cover: Jenny Truax
Centerfold: Mary Ann McGivern & Jenny Truax
The Centerfold Map can be downloaded from the Karen House website!

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, Haley Shoaf, Sean Ferguson, and Mary Ann McGivern. As always, letters to the editor are welcomed.

The Catholic Worker Journey

by Rosalie Riegle

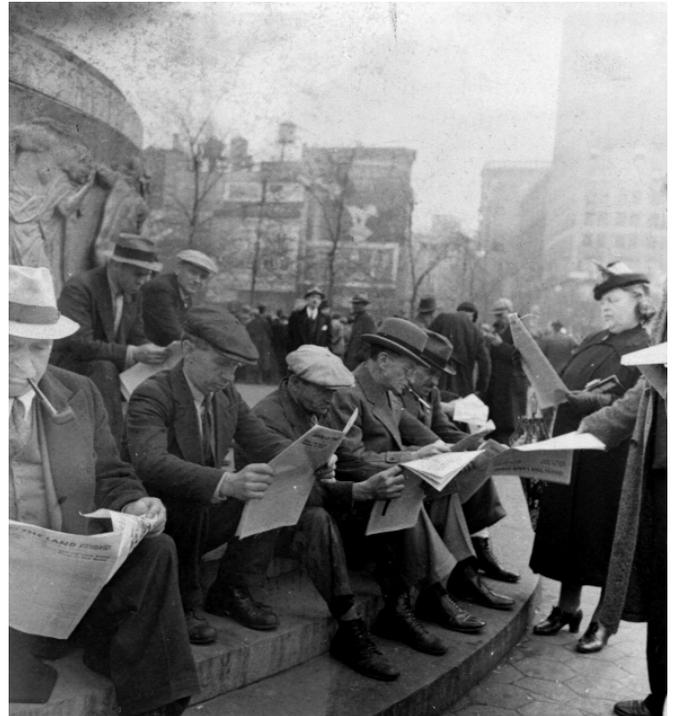
"We may have lost Dorothy, but we still have the Gospel."
- Peggy Scherer, November 30, 1980

Dorothy Day met Peter Maurin in New York City in 1932. She was a single mother with strong ties to pacifism and the American left and had recently become a Roman Catholic. He was an immigrant from France, steeped in an education European Catholicism with religious sensibility that harked to medieval ideals. Both were writers. Peter told Dorothy about his three-point program for building a Gospel world: informed social criticism, houses of hospitality, and communal farms. To these ideas, Day added unyielding pacifism and her uncanny ability to see God in everything and everyone. Out of their collaboration grew a newspaper called *The Catholic Worker*, with the first issue distributed on May Day, 1933 in Union Square.

Neither Peter nor Dorothy had any idea of starting a movement, but people came to them for food and lodging and to discuss the radical idea that lay men and women could take matters into their own hands and live the words that Jesus taught—to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, to call for peace and work for justice in the land.

Before they knew it, the newspaper had thousands of subscribers, houses of hospitality had sprung up across the country, and the Catholic Worker journey had begun. The organism which calls itself the Catholic Worker has no leaders, now that Dorothy and Peter are gone, and no written rules or regulations, with only the Aims and Means, published yearly by the New York house, to guide its work. Yet today there are now more than 203 communities around the world, according to catholicworker.org.

Those are the broad outlines, but it doesn't begin to tell the Catholic Worker story. That journey lives in the hundreds of communities that have come and gone



The Catholic Worker readers in Union Square, New York City, c. 1940.
Source: The Dorothy Day Guild

and struggled and stayed over the past 85 years. It lives in the failures of the first farms and the successes of the present ones. It traces its way from small family-led houses in rust-belt towns to unwieldy giants in our urban centers. It lives in the people it serves, both those who come for moral salvation—called Workers—and those who come for physical solace—called guests. It mostly survives on small donations, without government grants or interference, except when the government puts into prison those Catholic Workers who confront the empire and its military might.



Rosalie Riegle loves thinking and writing and working with the larger Catholic Worker movement. She lives in Evanston, IL and volunteers at Su Casa CW, but her heart remains in her native Michigan.

Thousands of people have walked the Catholic Worker journey. Some travel on the side of the road, volunteering and donating to a house of hospitality, and these members of extended communities are most appreciated and necessary. Some plunge into the work and into community, get their feet muddy in the ruts of the road and then leave, upset and disheartened. Some wipe the mud off their shoes and stay until they die and join the cloud of witnesses we remember in our frequent regional and national gatherings.

The Catholic Worker journey is replete with changing and sometimes diverging paths, and this bothers some people, but not all. Dan McCann, author of *The Catholic Worker After Dorothy: Practicing the Works of Mercy in a New Generation*, said in a podcast, "Communities can transform the world more easily if they have loose boundaries." Catholic Worker boundaries are loose; in fact, not even the name is accurate. Not all those who call themselves Catholic Workers are Catholic, and most don't work for more than subsistence wages, but instead give of their time to model a world where "it's easier to be good," as Peter would say. Workers live in voluntary poverty with the people they serve and become involved in neighborhood, community, and world problems, frequently writing about them in their newsletters and taking them to the streets in protest.

As an oral historian, I interviewed about 400 Catholic Workers between 1985 and 2010. When I analyzed the first 208 interviews, I found more unity within the movement than did some Catholic Worker scholars who work from printed texts. The unity I found then is one that rejoices in its tolerance for diversity and in its anarchism in not trying to legislate itself. At least most of the time, it does. Lately, the movement has been wracked by some who took an individual community's troubles to the larger group, asking for censure. Most didn't feel that was Dorothy's way. While withdrawing in many ways from the values of our contemporary world, the CW is still part of it, and so cannot help but reflect the world it inhabits in this time of fear and loud voices. The CW journey is not on a road walled in from the rest of the world and most don't think it should be.

There's no such thing as a "typical Catholic Worker" and every community's journey is different, united only in the fact that there are always bumps in the road, sometimes so big that the communities fail. To give a personal example, in 2010, my cofounders and I had to close the Jeanne Coallier Catholic Worker in Saginaw. We tried to give it to some folks at Karen House, which was then bursting at the seams with some thirty-odd Workers. Well, Saginaw just wasn't St. Louis, and nothing came

of my dream. I have since found a home at Su Casa in Chicago, a community which has weathered many crises. It's looking good, at least for now, but worried about the long-term livability of its huge building. And Karen House? It has building problems, too, and is presently looking for more people to join the work, as they bravely ask the hard questions about how our very CW structure can enable racism and injustice. God willing, Karen House will once again thrive and continue to be a strong voice in the movement. Yes, we will always have bumps in the road, but we'll have the Gospel. And as Dorothy's dear friend Joe Zarrella would always say, "The Catholic Worker is exciting, always, always exciting."



A poster that hangs on the wall at Karen Hosue.
Source: Karen House Facebook page

My Testimony

by Tammy Moore

If you would have told me when I was a kid that my life would end up perfect, I would not have believed you. But that's how it turned out now—perfect. It didn't start that way. I have struggled through things most of my life. The first few years were the best of my childhood. I lived with my Mom and my sister down the street from my Granddaddy's house. My Mom was working and my Grandpa took care of us while she was at work. Every weekend my uncle would take us places like the pool. Life was good. We were surrounded by people who loved us.

My Mom started dating her (now) husband when I was three. Our family laughs at the story of me, as a three-year old, walking up to him while he was visiting my Momma and handing him his keys and his wallet and telling him it was time for him to leave. He said he knew then I had a "smart mouth." When I turned six, things changed for us. We moved away from my Grandpa's neighborhood and lived with a lot of different people in St. Louis. We went from house to house and things were never very good. Sometimes we lived in shelters but we never stayed in any one place too long. The peace was gone. My Mom's husband was not always very good to her, and it was hard. I missed living by my Grandpa a lot.

Things got better for us when we moved to Karen House. People think it's so sad I grew up in shelters, and some shelters were sad, but Karen House was the best of all those years. The people there really loved us and looked after us. We had field trips all the time and did so much cool stuff. You really knew the Karen House people loved you no matter what. We moved out from



Tammy and her family with Jenny and Annjie in 2014.
Source: Annjie Schiefelbein

Karen House into another shelter, but didn't stay there too long. I remember when Momma told us we were moving back into Karen House that we cried because we were so happy. I felt like it was the best day of my life getting to go back.

But eventually we moved out again, always living with family or in rentals. It was hard, but it got harder, because when people tried to help Momma deal with problems with her husband, he moved us to Arkansas. I was so sad to move. We lived with a lot of my Momma's husband's family and it was rough. I didn't know how to



Tammy Moore is a patient care technician, a full-time student at Arkansas State University, and best of all, a mother. She loves her large crazy family and is always looking for ways to better herself and her family.



Tammy with her partner Cam and son Cash.
Source: Tammy Moore

fight before then, but we had to learn real quick. It was hard on the whole family. A lot of times we didn't have water or electricity. Me and my sister started working early, when we were around 14, so we could help the younger kids with school supplies and clothes. When we moved to Arkansas we didn't have anything. Me and my sister saved up so that the younger kids would have haircuts and things they needed. I remember when I was 14 my Mom couldn't go to register the younger kids for school, so I went. Isn't it crazy that they let me do that? But they did, and I did it every year after that. I felt real responsible to help my brothers and sisters through everything. Besides my two older sisters (one who never did live with us), I had seven younger brothers and sisters! It was a lot, and it was a very stressful life with how my Momma's husband treated her.

It meant so much to me that people from Karen House tried to help us before we moved to Arkansas. Later after we had been there a few years, I met another person who has helped me a lot—my pastor, Mary Golphin (Ms. G.). One day at church, all the confusion, embarrassment, pain, struggle, sadness, and anger just built up in me one

day. That day music was playing, I was tired and stressed, and I broke down and started crying. She told me I was a strong kid, and that most kids hadn't been through what I been through even by adulthood. She could just tell I had been through so much. She told me I had to forgive and let go. I had a moment of epiphany. I decided I was just gonna let go and rebuild my life. She told me I didn't have to be a product of my environment. I didn't understand that then, but I do now. I decided not to be a victim of my environment. That was when I was 14 years old.

During this time, I had missed 50 days of school in one year because I got suspended so much. I would have been permanently suspended from school if Ms. G didn't go in to talk to the principal. She saw we were living with no utilities or water and helped us out by letting us stay in one of her houses. My Momma's husband was still terrible, but at least we had a regular place to stay.

My Momma's husband stayed terrible until we got old enough to fight back. These days he is gentle, and all the grandkids love him. He and my Momma go out and have fun and love on each other all the time. It is strange for me, but I had to learn to let go of my anger. The hardest thing I ever had to do was to let go of everything and not to be angry no more. I was angry that people were not saving us, not helping us. I realized it takes more energy to be mad, and that walking around angry and sad didn't help.

Now I'm not angry anymore; I feel very relaxed and humble. I had been putting all my energy into being angry and acting out. I put so much energy into hating somebody who could not care less. It didn't affect him at all, just me. I decided to let go of anger to stop hurting myself.

I think the most important lesson I've learned in life is that it is all necessary, the good and the bad. There is no reason to be ashamed. I know that this life is my testimony and my journey and I am proud to say I made it. I learned that when it's time to choose, make it count. Stay strong. I wish I could tell myself that when I was a kid- every headache and every heartbreak, every moment I've endured from people hurting me is necessary. Life is like a puzzle; you gotta split all the pieces up and spread them out alone before you can put it all together. Now I know that.

I wish I could tell my kid self that it is not OK now, but that it's going to be OK. It's not your fault; you didn't choose this life, it chose you. Give it your all and don't let up. And my kid self would look at my life now with disbelief, amazement. She would be very emotional and very proud.

My Momma taught me that we came in this world alone and would leave this world alone. Friends are not

gonna assist. You don't have to have friends and you won't die. A lot of kids are killing themselves because they don't have friends and aren't as cool as them. Family is everything. When it comes to family you can't choose your first family, but you can decide who else you want to be part of your family. But life itself taught me the most important things: that I am tough, and that God is real.

I said at the beginning that my life is perfect now, and it's true. April 27, 2014 was my one year anniversary with my boyfriend and childhood friend. Regardless of me being this poor girl from the hood who was rough around the edges, he was still there. I come with a lot of baggage, and he just always wants to know what he can do to take a load off of me. He has helped me realize what selfless love looks like. On December 29, 2016 my son was born. I

felt different, I felt whole, I felt relieved. I knew that I now had a purpose in my journey. I had a clean slate because in his eyes, I was nothing but perfection.

I went through more things in my life before the age of 13 years old than most people have in their whole life. I've been broken physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. I have watched people I love get hurt over and over again. It feels like we were homeless more than half of my life. Growing up, I was angry and embarrassed and ashamed. Now I know that it's me and my testimony, my journey, and it was necessary. Necessary to make me strong enough for where I'm going. Because of my past, I'm strong enough for my future.

I am humbled.



A recent photo of Tammy with her family.
Source: Tammy Moore

"What is Done in Love is Done Well"

by Melissa Brickey

Rosati-Kain High School introduced me to Karen House in 1988 when I was looking for a junior service project site. Karen House was on a list of several options for a site – and an opportunity that I didn't take at the time. It wasn't the right time for me to find Karen House, and the universe knew it.

In 1994, I had my right leg amputated. I was 22 and my amputation and the year long rehabilitation as a result of it completely shifted my perspective on the world and my place in it. I wouldn't go so far as to say that at 22, I became wise. But I can say that I learned a lot about myself during that year – it was the first time that I really had to dig deep to get through days. It was the first time that I realized that sometimes, getting through days is all I can ask of myself.

About 4 years later, I left the country to join the Peace Corps. My time as an English as a Second Language teacher in Latvia was cut short due to an injury to my left knee. My immediate return to the states required me to find a job quickly. I found a job that I loved at a bookstore, where I met life-long friends and the kindest man I've ever met, who I married 15 years ago.

During my bookstore years, I read all of the time – almost a requirement to be a bookseller. I had shelves and shelves of books in my little Souldard apartment that focused on justice, inequity, racism, hope for a better, kinder future. I devoured those books – and highlighted and bookmarked and quoted (to anyone I could) all of them.

At that same time, my grandparents were ailing and being cared for by several loving, gentle women. On one of my visits, one of the loving, gentle women asked me if I was feeling happy in my life choices. I talked to her about those books – about feeling both angry and powerless to changing the things that made me so angry.

I told her that I had admired the lives that my two aunts, who are School Sisters of Notre Dame, had committed to – voluntary poverty, community living, service. I told her that I didn't want to be a sister. She saw something in me that prompted her to encourage me to visit Karen House.

I moved into Karen House in the winter of 2001. An early and impactful memory occurred one cold, February day when I realized that one of the kids – I think she was in 4th or 5th grade – was at the house during the day, rather than being at school. I asked her about it and she said she hadn't been to school for a few days.

Her mom was doing all that she could to get to a healthy place, but I knew she was having a tough time. I asked her if I could help in any way, and she asked me to call her daughter's school to let them know that she had been out sick and would return the

next day. I tried calling the school and did not get an answer after several attempts. Finally, 15 minutes after initiating the call, my call was answered. I told the woman on the other line that the young girl would not be at school again today. She was not only not aware that the girl had not been to school over the last few days, she

“
Education is
the most **POWERFUL**
WEAPON
which you can use
to change
the **WORLD**.
”
-Nelson Mandela

Source: www.steemit.com/stach/@victoriaattat



Melissa Brickey lives in South St. Louis with her adorable husband, David, and her even more adorable cat, Ellen.

You will know your vocation by the joy that it brings you. You will know. You will know when it's right. – Dorothy Day



Source: www.pinterest.com/pin/429390145693556162/?!p=true

also clearly did not know who the girl was, as I had to spell her name several times.

I was struck by this conversation, and how the young girl seemed relatively anonymous to her school – the place, outside of her home, where she should feel the most love. This was not my first experience with the realities of urban education. A few years before, I had completed my student teaching at an urban school. The amazing and talented teachers that I worked with were overworked and tired, the school lacked adequate teaching materials, the building was in disrepair, and the children brought personal and family trauma with them into the school day. I had not only read Jonathon Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*, but had witnessed the truths he wrote about in my student teaching.

And even in my knowledge of inequities in education, I had not considered the simple notion that the most important factor to a child's educational trajectory is love, care, and feeling valued, or what Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin termed "personalism." The brief phone call with this young girl's school elucidated that truth for me – and gave me the vocation that I had been searching for up until then.

Not long after that phone call, I had the opportunity to sit with Bob Sweeny, the founder of a small, independent Catholic middle school called De La Salle, located about 2 miles from Karen House. Bob, along with a group

of individuals committed to educational equity, opened De La Salle 3 years before. The values of the school centered on personalism – that each child deserves respect, dignity, and should feel and be loved.

I soon found a permanent place at De La Salle, while maintaining my connection to Karen House as a community member and house taker. As a result, I had the opportunity to bring many of my Karen House kids with me to De La Salle. There are too many children (many of whom are now college graduates) to name, but I know that in loving them, I found, and continue to find, hope.

I have moved from De La Salle and out of the Karen House neighborhood. I am now appropriately back at Rosati-Kain High School, working with and for young women at another incredible educational institution that first and foremost, loves and cares for its students.

Early on at Karen House, I remember reading Dorothy Day's quote, "You will know your vocation by the joy that it brings you. You will know. You will know when it's right." When I first read it, I thought for sure I had found that vocation at Karen House. And in a way I did. The Karen House children – Michael, Sade, Winnie, Tammy, Abubacar, Yoroh, Darryl, Mercedes, Quinton, Shannon, Shameka, Walter, Robert, Macean, Lawrence (and so many others!) – with their potential, their resilience, their humor – led me to a lifetime commitment to their futures through love.



Eliseo's Story: A Journey to the U.S.

Interview by Marilyn Lorenz

Eliseo Ramirez lived at Cass House during the 1980s and became a friend of many in the Catholic Worker community. I met with Eliseo and Telma at their home. This is their story in their words:

When and why did you leave Guatemala?

I left in April of 1983 after our second daughter was born in January and our first daughter died of meningitis. The hospital did not have the medicine she needed and we could not buy it from the pharmacy.

Could you describe the path you took?

I left Guatemala City and traveled by bus to the border with Mexico. After crossing with a visa, I found work to survive and continue my journey. I worked for Coca-Cola and painted signs for a political party campaign. Things were difficult but not like it is today. The Mexican police did not bother us. We rode the Bestia (freight train, hanging on for dear life). This was the normal campesino means of transportation. Some unlucky travelers fell under the wheels and lost legs or worse. Finally, I reached the border at El Paso, TX. It took three months to cross. After crossing, I jumped on more trains, hoping they would take me to a place where I could get work.

What happened next?

One day when the train I was on stopped, I saw a license plate for Illinois and I thought I was in Chicago. I had not had anything to eat or drink for two days and I was hunger and thirsty. I saw a man on his front porch and he gave me an apple and pop corn (which made



A photo of Cass House, which was open as a Catholic Worker house from 1978 - 1988. Unfortunately, under the absentee ownership of Paul McKee, Cass House suffered a catastrophic fire in 2017 and was completely demolished in 2018.

Source: Karen House

me sick). Then I was walking and praying. Finally, I came upon a man picking green beans in his front yard. With a little Spanish and English, we were able to communicate. He brought me into his house and put me in his daughter's room. I had a shower and they gave me new clothes. Then his wife fed me. I slept until 3:00 in the next afternoon!

How did you end up in St Louis?

This is a great story! The couple took me to their



Marilyn Lorenz is a long-time friend of Karen House who is retired, but not unoccupied. She is greatly enjoying being a grandparent of Finn.

church where people knew the Catholic Worker in St. Louis (they volunteered). Turns out I was in O’Fallon, IL. There was a black man who spoke Spanish and he spoke with me and then called Karen House. I could not stay there since the guests were all women, so I was helped by members of the Quaker Meeting and was passed from house to house. Finally, I went to live with a family with young children. I stayed there for a few months until I moved to Cass House because there was no public transportation where they lived. I needed to find work. From Cass House I was able to get to work.

You have a family here, when and how did they come?

That’s another long story. I missed my wife and children so friends first went to visit Telma and the children (aged almost 3, 4, 6) and then made arrangements for them to come. They got a Mexican visa but were turned back when they traveled outside of Mexico City (the visa was specific). With the help of Catholic sisters and friends of friends here, we finally were helped by a “coyote.” It was not easy, lots of walking, seeing helicopters overhead, staying in rooms with no beds. Telma worked in the market so she could feed the kids. Another sister helped her and she was able to fly to St Louis, arriving at 1am in October of 1986.

What would you say to our readers?

One cannot take this journey without a very strong push. It is a really, really hard decision to make. The journey is not easy.

Does this relate to the caravan today?

Yes, I would hope that they could have the opportunity to arrive here. Several will make it if they have family already



Source: Unknown



Artwork: Pheobe Wall

in the US, but many will go back and perhaps try again later. Most will be sent back but if they register, they will be fingerprinted and will be in the database. This will make it harder to come back. The whole process is very different today because of communication and technology. Also, the drug mafia is much stronger and more dangerous. That is why the people are traveling together, for protection. This is safety in numbers. Politicians are helping them move north, perhaps because they don’t want to deal with the numbers.

A final word?

We understand what they are going through. We hope they realize their dreams.



Journeys of the St. Louis Catholic Worker

The Catholic Worker presence in St. Louis encompassed a series of waxing and waning since the opening of Karen House in 1977.

Karen House

On a hot Sunday morning in June 1977, Ann Manganaro and Mary Ann McGivern drove to see St. Liborius Convent - a possible home for a new Catholic Worker.

Soon weekly planning meetings began, rehab on the house commenced, and later seven community members moved in to begin what would be a 40+ year legacy of hospitality in North St. Louis.

Madison Street

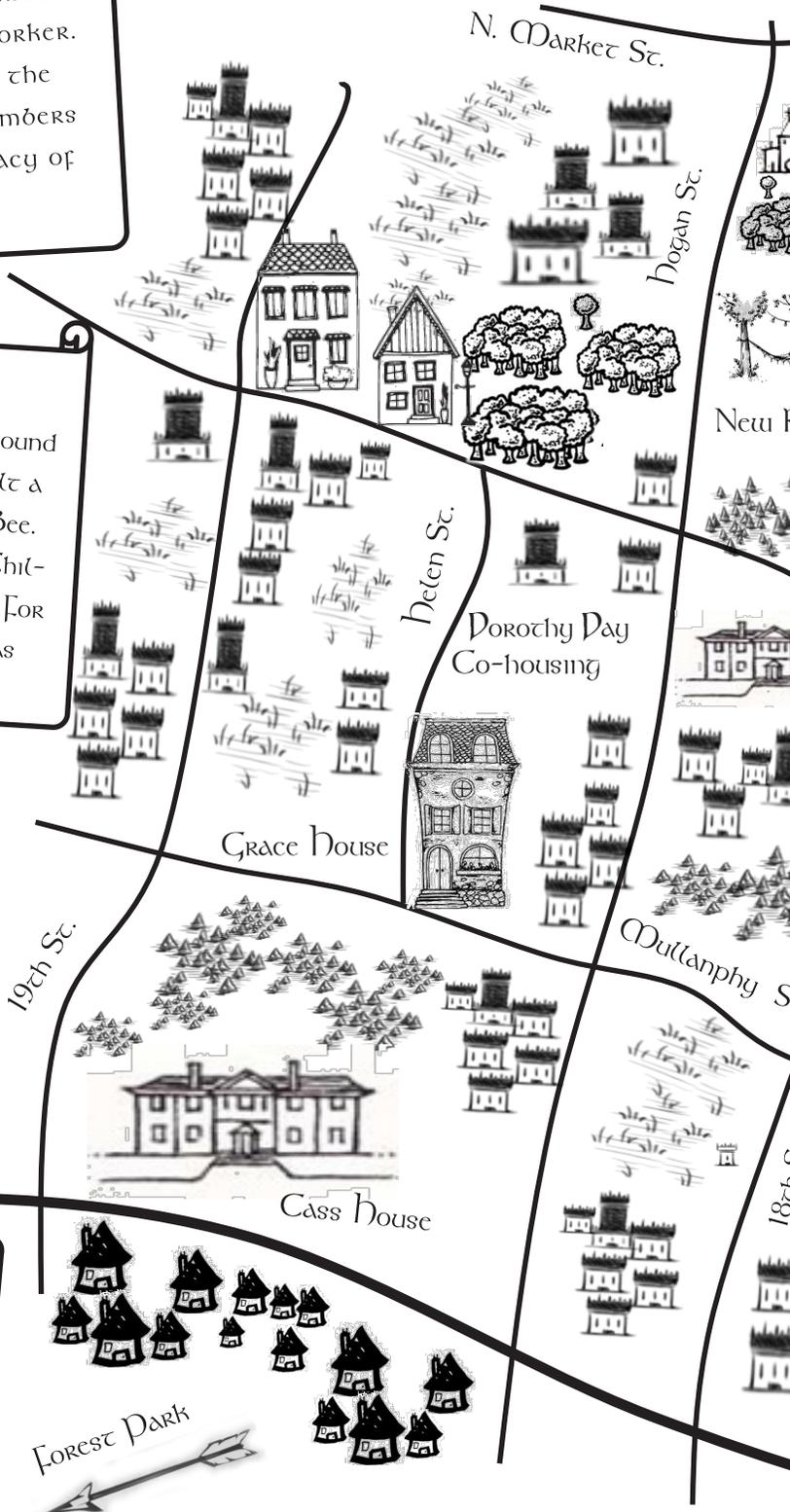
Two couples rehabled houses on Madison street around the same time in the mid 2000s. Tony and Julie built a house based on Permaculture design named Green Bee. Jenny and Annjie created a space they named Teka Childress House to live with a formerly unhoused family. For several years of simultaneous rehabs, the corner was filled with dust, frustration and laughter.

Grace House

Becky met Olivia, who had recently come from Central America, through her work as a Nurse Practitioner. Less than a year later, she was sharing space with Olivia, her beautiful newborn twins, and several Catholic Workers.

Cass House

Sue and LuAnne opened Cass House in the historic Clemens mansion. During the 1980s, Cass House, Little House and Karen House formed a triangle of Catholic Workers houses, sharing life, spirituality and different forms of hospitality.



This neighborhood Map is available for Download on the Karen House website!

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NORTH ST. LOUIS HAS
waning experiments in love
n 1977. Here's a glimpse.



Kaðat House and Monroe Street

Carolyn and Terry came to St. Louis around 2000 from Chicago, and for many years, a thriving community of people lived in different houses on Monroe street. Large Friday night meals were part of the weekly schedule.

The Four Family Flat

For decades, the flat has been called home to dozens of Catholic Workers and former Catholic Workers who share meals and life together.

New Roots Urban Farm

Still growing organic vegetables today, New Roots was founded by a small group of folks in the early 2000s, with interns, harvest parties, and an abundance of strong community.

Dorothy Day Co-Housing

Co-Housing was a new experiment, with Catholic Worker-types living in proximity and community with former guests of Karen House. For about five years, the group shared life, meals, and a focus on the "Co-Housing kids".

Little House aka "Ella Dickson House"

Fr. Marty Manion visited the sick often. When he heard that Mary Ann would like to live in a smaller house than Karen House, he encouraged Ella Dickson to give Mary Ann her four flat - not a small house, but smaller, hence "Little House."

Me and You, Fertile Ground

by Mary Densmore

New Roots Urban Farm is small and made of a blanket of black gold. It is a midwife, bringing into being disparate populations of life and nurseries of earth worms. In just a pinch of soil there are more microbes than there are humans on the planet. The ground is constantly moving and dancing, but our eyes weren't invited to the party.

The vacant land held within the chain-link fence is holy scripture; on it is written a creed by which to live. If she could sing us her story there would be songs of being cared for by indigenous people and a chorus of death and new life with the seasons, yet some parts need no song at all. As we lift the broken bricks and other forms of contamination from the ground, we know we also must do much more to remove the debris still under the surface from capitalism and oppression.

In the 1/3 of an acre space, the garden beds overflow with seasonal vegetables, loofah gourd creates an ocean of yellow flowers, jerusalem artichokes crane their necks towards the sun and cast shade on the chickens, and pollinators buzz like they are moving through Times Square. So much is happening and nothing is happening at the same time, and the border gets blurry between farm and home.

Ten years ago, I made a big decision. I packed two bags, my bicycle and guitar and loaded them into the pickup truck of someone I didn't know. She was a friend

of a friend, and graciously gave me a ride as I moved to St. Louis. Up until that point I had lived almost my whole life in Georgia. Moving to St. Louis was exciting and full of many new possibilities for me. I was thrilled to join the Catholic Worker Movement, to be a part of the Kabat House Community, and to live out my values with other passionate people. I was also hopeful about beginning a new relationship with James.

I began to volunteer at New Roots Urban Farm and I felt a sense of grounding like I had not experienced before. Working my hands in the soil, planting seeds, learning about building raised beds, crop rotation, and fermentation was life changing for me. My upbringing in Atlanta suburbs was sterile and void of relationship to the landscape. While working at New Roots, I grew in connection with nature, was in tune with the seasons, noticed the plants around me, and learned what was perennial, native, or edible. I also grew in connection with myself. I loved the

daily movements of gardening, the moving about with purposing: checking on crops, harvesting, washing, packing. I studied vegetables, read cookbooks, and prepared meals for myself and others with fresh ingredients. Food never tasted so good! All the while, I was learning about myself, reflecting on life and the world and dreaming together with friends about building a new society.

Over the years there have been too many shifts and



Source: New Roots Urban Farm's Facebook page



Mary Densmore is a farmer at New Roots Urban Farm. She plans to spend her downtime this winter making lots of soaps, staying close to the fire, playing soccer, and eating good food.



Greens and carrots and turnips, oh my! A beautiful and delicious harvest from New Roots!
Source: New Roots Urban Farm's Facebook page

changes to count. Friends moved and new ones came, the Kabat House Catholic Worker community is no longer, and I'm living a life that I didn't even know was possible. Through all the shifts and changes, my ground(ing) has been New Roots Urban Farm. The space is like an old friend, so much can happen without ever exchanging words and we are always glad to see each other.

I wish the land could talk because I only know a small piece of the journey. Over the 14 years that the project has been around, the space has been attended to, cared for, and loved by hundreds of people. Just like I can't see or believe all the microbes that live in the soil, the same is true for the connections that have been made. Feet have walked the pathways thousands of times. Students have slowed down enough to connect with themselves and the world around them to notice the depth of how a carrot grows. We've harvested thousands of pounds of

vegetables. Relationships have begun and ended. There have been countless rooster crows and shrills from children having new experiences. The hoop house exudes a sense of love, peacefulness and curiosity; it's a container holding all the sacred moments from workshops, special events, potlucks, and the everyday comings and goings. It is home.

Probably the most significant lesson I've learned while working at New Roots is that where there is fertile ground, change is abundant and growth cannot be contained. In the height of summer, growth is rapid and unrelenting, and in the dead of winter seeds rest under the soil only to come to life in the spring. On this journey, it is impossible for things to stay the same, and I am grateful that this ground has taught me much more than growing plants.



Healing Justice

by Dr. Kira Banks

The Ferguson Uprising shaped my personal and professional lives in ways I didn't know were necessary. I have loved being Black my entire life, but Mike Brown Jr.'s death made me put that love into a different kind of action. His murder pushed me to be more adamant about my love of self and Black people and more demanding that we, and the world, acknowledge and honor our inherent dignity.

As a psychologist, I have long explored how people make sense of their Blackness. My research has examined the experience of discrimination and navigation of racism for over two decades, yet the Ferguson Uprising made me use my voice in new ways. It brought me close to young activists I might not have crossed paths with. Some of my dearest friends, people I would literally fight for and with, are at least 10 years younger yet more wise and brave than I will ever be. Those relationships put me in positions I did not anticipate. No one ever *expects* to be tear gassed while peacefully protesting. I never thought I would be a part of a federal restraining order against the police. And yet, here I am forever changed by the experiences of 2014 and beyond.

I understand that my academic work and family work is important, yet I also know that I also have an obligation to reach a broader audience. It's not enough for me to talk about how psychologists should acknowledge the way race, and social identities more broadly, impact individuals. I need to create protocols that make it common practice. It's not enough for me to advise my clients to engage in self-care and prioritize their well-being. I must do the same for myself. It's not enough for me to hope that exposure to activism will shape my children's thinking. I have to raise them to understand systems so they are able to dismantle them and build a more equitable society. All of this doesn't



Police using tear gas on protestors in Ferguson, MO after Michael Brown, Jr., was shot and killed.
Source: Wikipedia (Creative Commons)

happen by accident or as a result of hope. It happens in community and over time. It's that last realization that has led me to my latest project, Raising Equity—the intentional decision to be an adult in the life of children who cultivates an equity mindset. The Ferguson Uprising taught me that Raising Equity is essential to long-term change.

Our Black children need to understand how the system of racism has lied to them about who they are. They need to be aware of how the narrow stories that are told to them in the media prop up White Supremacy, and when they appropriate those ideas, they are contributing to their own oppression. They need to see the lack of funding for the St. Louis Public Schools not as a reflection of their worth, but as a clear reflection of racism at work. They need to understand and be able



Dr. Kira Banks is a mom, partner, professor, and consultant. You can learn more about her and Raising Equity on Facebook (Dr. Kira Banks and Raising Equity), Instagram (@drkirabanks), Twitter (@kirabanks), and YouTube (Truth to Power Featuring Dr. Kira Banks).

to analyze these dynamics so that there is no mistake that who they are is not equal to what racist systems tell them.

Their agency and motivation need not come from trying to overcome an internal deficit but working to navigate the external barriers we as adults should be dismantling. They deserve to know this truth. All children deserve to know this truth. Far too many college students walk into my classroom and are learning about systems of oppression for the first time. They are floored, sad, mad, and don't understand why they are just learning these things. We have failed our young people when they have to play catch up in this way. We wouldn't do that around mathematics or sex education, why should we do it when it comes to racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression? It serves the status quo, and we need to do things differently.

Another evolution that has taken place within my academic work as a result of the Ferguson Uprising is increased attention to the topic of race, racism, and social justice at Saint Louis University where I am an Associate Professor of Psychology. The Institute for Healing Justice and Equity is in the planning phase at Saint Louis University and will be led by Keon Gilbert (School of Public Health and Social Justice), Amber Johnson (Department of Communication), Ruqaiyah Yearby (School of Law), and me. The mission is *"to eliminate disparities caused by systemic oppression, the Institute advances healing justice and equity through research, training, community capacity building, and policy change."*

Our desire is to be a national model for community building, knowledge curation related to equity, and healing from social injustice. Healing Justice refers to the process of creating pathways to being whole and in relationship with self and others while acknowledging harm from interpersonal, institutional and structural oppression. Equity refers to the equalizing policies and practices that mitigate oppression. The Institute is committed to being honest that **the academy does not have the answer**, but that the skills of the academy in collaboration with the indigenous knowledge of community can generate viable answers.

The Institute will utilize academic research, community practice, academic and public sector writing, teaching within and outside of the academy, community activism, and policy development to organize, create, solidify, and disseminate frameworks and practices for healing justice and equity. Together, healing justice and equity build capacity to create just, healthy, and equitable communities. I believe The Ferguson Uprising made a space like the Institute possible at Saint Louis University, and I am excited to be a part of it.

If the Uprising had not occurred, the essence of my work would be the same but the urgency and scale would not. I am enraged it had to happen, proud of those who wouldn't leave the streets, and honored to be a small part of the work—forever changed. We have nothing to lose but our chains.



Source: Unknown

The Tale of the St. Louis Debtor's Prison

Excerpted by Jenny Truax from the Close The Workhouse Report

Jasmine Borden moved to St. Louis in hopes of a better life for her and her four children. Her sister told her that St. Louis would offer her better opportunities than she had in Sacramento, California, where she was born and raised. Her life in St. Louis was going well—she had a job, her kids were in daycare, she had a house she liked, a landlord she got along with, and she had even bought a car so that she could pick up some extra shifts at work. Jasmine said, “I was living the American Dream when out of nowhere my life just changed. It changed all because I got arrested while driving.”

In the summer of 2017, police arrested Jasmine after she got into a car accident. Her bond was set at \$10,000 and the judge ordered that it must be paid in full with cash in order for her to be released. On that day, Jasmine remembers thinking, “I don't have \$10,000 just saved away in an account somewhere. So, that that was the scariest thing because I realized, ‘How long do I have to wait to make this bond? How can I make this bond? Who is going to post this bond? When is my next court date?’” Jasmine realized that to fight her charge meant she would remain incarcerated.

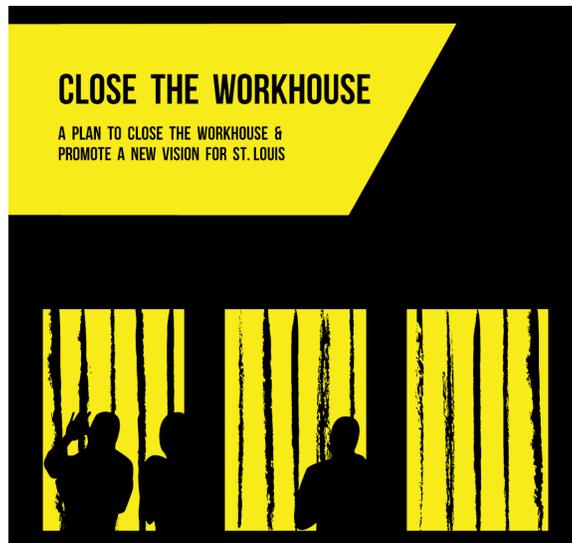
As a result, Jasmine spent over two months at the Workhouse, a wretched and infamous St. Louis Medium Security institution described as “a hopeless place with black mold on the walls, stopped up toilets, holes in the ceiling, and rats running under cell doors.” The tale of the Workhouse in St. Louis is one that reflects larger U.S. systems that target low-income and people of color, so in

some ways the story is not anomalous at all. At the same time, the story of this particular institution - less than 10 minutes from Karen House - is particularly abhorrent. Right now, there's an opportunity for our community to be part of the tale of it closing.

The journey of the Workhouse began in 1843, roughly twenty years after Missouri was granted statehood as a slave-holding Union State through the Missouri Compromise of 1820. At the original Workhouse – which served as a labor camp and debtors' prison – the poor were sentenced to manual labor crushing limestone for city streets when unable to pay their fines. Poverty was at the root of people's incarceration: “The reason why these [women and] men are in chains in the St. Louis Workhouse is because they are poor. Probably many of them are innocent, but certainly everyone is ‘broke’. There would be no more chance of a [person] with money having chains put on them in the Workhouse than there would be a of a camel passing through the eye of a needle. Has it come to this—that poverty itself has become a crime?” (Post-Dispatch, 1905). Jasmine's experience demonstrates the truth

of this statement made over 113 years ago, and shows how little things have changed.

The current Workhouse was opened in 1966, and its new location to North St. Louis mimicked the racialized migration patterns of the mid-twentieth century in St. Louis, where white and richer communities moved toward south St. Louis and Black communities were segregated in



Source: CloseTheWorkhouse.org



Check out www.closetheworkhouse.org to read this incredible report and learn how you can support the campaign!

northern areas. The Workhouse soon became the target of lawsuits and judicial interference due to the conditions in the jail: in one lawsuit, detained people described inoperative toilets, inadequate ventilation, inadequate lighting, and infestations of rats and insects.

Years later in response to a lawsuit brought against the City for the conditions at the Workhouse, Federal Judge Cahill described the targeted police actions and aggressive overuse of the criminal legal system which resulted in the mass incarceration of Black men and the poor at the Workhouse. "Certain neighborhoods in St. Louis have become the target of intensive police activity. . . These intrusive tactics, coupled with detention because of poverty, lead to a destruction of confidence in the criminal justice system." While the Workhouse is a particular abomination, it also reflects the larger national trend towards the targeted policing and criminalization of segregated Black communities. Nearly 90% of the individuals in the Workhouse are Black though only half of St. Louis's population is Black.

After two months in the Workhouse, Jasmine finally obtained free representation with the Public Defenders office. Her lawyer argued a bond reduction motion. The judge reset her bond to 10% cash on a \$5,000 bond; the community could pay the \$500 bond so she could escape the Workhouse. While she was incarcerated, Jasmine lost her income, which led to her losing her housing and many of her belongings. She was also separated from her children who were bounced around homes, living with her relatives. Jasmine's harrowing experience at the Workhouse has had a long-term effect on her life, impacting her mental health, and leaving her concerned about the residual emotional distress her children might experience from the family's separation.

And today, in 2019? Things have not improved, and there is a robust campaign to close the Workhouse, one that has emerged from the outcry that was the Ferguson Uprising. Today, we see that the inhumane and abusive conditions in the Workhouse violate the Constitution. Nearly everyone incarcerated in the Workhouse has not been convicted of a crime and is legally presumed innocent. The Workhouse almost exclusively confines individuals awaiting trial - people like Jasmine who are there solely because they cannot afford bond. (Cash bail allows wealthy individuals to be released while confining the poor simply because they cannot pay. Unlike similar cities, St. Louis allows only 4% of individuals to be released on a promise to appear, instead setting a median bond of \$25,000. Simply put, this does not happen in other cities.)

Today, over half of St. Louis's budget is devoted to "public safety", but the current approach of policing and incarceration - both locally and nationally - does not



Photo from Close the Workhouse Rally for Freedom at St. Louis City's Justice Center on July 4, 2018. Source: Close the Workhouse Facebook page

actually make us safer. The *Close the Workhouse Report* (an incredibly illuminating and helpful resource available on the Close the Workhouse website) outlines a step-by-step plan to close the Workhouse and suggests that these funds should be reinvested to promote a new vision of public safety that addresses the root causes of crime - like economic insecurity, lack of opportunity, living with a mental illness, and substance use disorders - to create lasting stability and safety. As evidenced in Jasmine's experience, the current approach only exacerbates these root insecurities.

The Workhouse is part and parcel of a racialized system of mass incarceration that grew directly out of slavery and Jim Crow and perpetuates this shameful legacy in America today. Though Jasmine has worked hard to successfully rebuild her life after her incarceration, she still lives in constant fear that everything may fall apart again. "The Workhouse has changed my life so dramatically. I'm still a part of it because at any time anything I do can end me up back there." The Close the Workhouse Campaign is grounded in a commitment to end an ongoing war against Black people that has been waged against generations of families in St. Louis: "Our aim is not to reform, but to deconstruct a racist system that has destroyed lives and to abolish the practice of criminalizing the poor. We embrace this task in order to vindicate the victims of the Workhouse and to secure future generations' ability to thrive."

Let's all take the opportunity to join and support this campaign, and close the chapter of this particular story.



At Jefferson & Cass: Unearthed Stories of Centuries Past

by Sean Ferguson

Beginning in 2016, the St. Louis Archeological Research Center conducted what is known as a “cultural resource managing report” (CRM) on the land in north St. Louis City where the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) is being built. The NGA is a government intelligence program that utilizes geospatial (data regarding people and their location/movement) technology to gather information and assist military efforts. Many term the NGA the “Spy Agency” due to its use of satellite imagery and non-consensual monitoring. CRM reports are used all over the world to preserve and maintain historic sites and remains. In Ireland, for example, it is against the law to begin building a structure such as a home or office building without first hiring a Cultural Resource Manager to dig a test trench in the land that one is attempting to build on. This is because Ireland has centuries worth of history that has been built on top of each other as civilizations rise, fall, and are forgotten under the earth. Similarly, in the United States, public entities such as the NGA are responsible for managing the possible cultural resources that may exist under their land before they build such a massive structure, as stated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In February of 2016, the Army Corp. of Engineers published the early findings of their report. The 245-page CRM report addresses the area carved out for the NGA as well as surrounding borders throughout multiple time periods.

Pre-Clovis (9500 BCE)

Repeating lessons we likely learned in our history classes in elementary school, the report restates that early humans in this part of the world likely crossed the natural land/ice bridge known as Beringia between 23,000 and 14,000 years ago. These early people settled around bodies of water such as rivers or lakes. Sinkholes

acted as catches for rain water creating smaller ponds where animals gathered to drink. This made prime hunting grounds for early humans whose prey was large creatures such as mastodons. There were multiple sink holes along what is now Cass Avenue, making the NGA site a popular hunting ground during the pre-Clovis era.

Dalton (8900-7900 BCE)

During this time in the Mississippi River area, early humans took advantage of the beautiful bluffs as dry places to store their tools. These tools included, “digging tools to obtain plant roots and excavate features; nutting stones and milling stones for processing plants; and adzes, spokeshaves, and drills for working wood or bone. These tools indicate a diversity of activities was performed at the seasonal camps, with woodworking being especially important” (20).

Early Archaic to Late Woodland (7900 BCE-1050 CE)

These eras bring to light developments in living, hunting, and building. During the Archaic periods, nets for fishing were introduced allowing the people of the followed by stable farming methods during the Woodland periods. These advancements allowed the population of the Mississippi River area to stabilize as the people began to rely more on the farming of goosefoot, knotweed, maygrass, and a little barley instead of the nomadic lifestyle of hunting and gathering.

Mississippi (1050-1400 CE)

The Mississippi Period is when we see the construction of the mounds that our part of the country is so famous for. The most famous in our area would be the Cahokia Mounds located near now East St. Louis. There was also a set of mounds near the NGA site. Twenty-five mounds sat on the Mississippi bluffs just over a mile



Sean Ferguson is a high school history teacher and amateur archaeologist. One of his favorite pastimes is hanging out with his derpy St. Bernard named Thea.

southeast of the NGA. These mounds were four hundred yards in length and two hundred yards in breadth (Brackenridge 1814), known locally as the “Falling Gardens” because of its resemblance to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. By 1200 CE, the mounds in the St. Louis and surrounding areas had been abandoned, likely due to environmental degradation. According to the Osage’s oral tradition, they had moved west of the Ohio River by 400 CE, and their influence and societal power took firm hold after the decline of the mound-builders around 1400.

French Colonial Use (1700-1803)

According to the report, St. Louis was not occupied by indigenous people when French settlers arrived in the 18th century. This is likely due to the movement of many of the native tribes during the French and Indian War, which disrupted the native peoples’ seasonal migrating as well as trade. In 1764, Pierre Laclède and August Chouteau founded the city of St. Louis. As with many early French settlements, St. Louis was established with Commons and Common Fields—farmland and grazing pastures located on the perimeter of the settlement which settlers shared. In 1803, the United States acquired St. Louis and the surrounding French settlements during the Louisiana Purchase.

Mid-1800s

The report picks up with census data beginning in 1860 with 105 families living in the NGA area. Of these families, 53% were Irish and 28% were German, with the remainder being small percentages of French, Swiss, English, and Dutch. Jobs mirrored what we might think of as frontier occupations of white people on Indigenous land such as cigar makers, stone cutters, plasterers, cabinet makers, blacksmiths, grocers, and brick makers.

Early-1900s

According to the report, demographics of the NGA area began to change in the early 1900s with an influx of immigrants from Italy and eastern Europe. By the 1930s

however, most residents were born in the United States to parents who were also born in this country. Many young, working class families and small business owners lived in the NGA area during this time.

The report’s research abruptly ends with the early-1900s. There is no discussion about the more recent history of the NGA area and there is no discussion explaining why. Ending this article where the report ends seemed

woefully incomplete, so here is some equally important history to fill in the 90-year gap of the report:

Post-WWII to Today

After World War II, the racial demographics of the NGA area began to change rapidly as many white residents moved out to the suburbs and many African Americans moved in to the St. Louis Place neighborhood. A large number of the African Americans who moved into the neighborhood had been previously displaced by the “urban renewal,” or as James Baldwin called it in 1963, the “Negro removal,” of Milk Creek Valley to expand Saint Louis University. The community was a thriving, proud, Black neighborhood through the 1970s, supporting a dense fabric of single- and multi-family housing, schools, churches, community centers, and light industry.

Pruitt-Igoe, the city’s largest public housing project, was built directly south of St. Louis Place in 1954. Originally intended to house

up to 15,000 residents, Pruitt-Igoe was leveled just twenty later due to incredibly poor planning and an extreme lack of funding. (Check out the film *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* for more information!) Businesses in the neighborhood began to close in the 1970s and more neighbors moved away without being replaced. Despite the losses, many families continued to call St. Louis Place home until they were forced to relocate in 2016 to make way for the NGA site. In our Summer 2017 Round Table titled “(Dis)Placement,” we share some more of this history as well as a powerful article from Sheila Rendon, one of the residents who was displaced by the NGA.



Figure 138: Location of Possible Test Blocks



A map from the CRM report showing the land that was researched.

Source: Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, Inc.



Catholic Worker Thought & Action

The Refugee Caravans and the Walls We Build

by **John Heid**

What I recall most vividly is the laughter that floated across the hallway. The back bedroom of Casa Mariposa (House of the Butterfly) in Tucson, AZ was our largest. It had a private bath and a separate entrance. The room had offered respite to hundreds of women and children seeking asylum, primarily from Guatemala, between 2012-2014. My room was directly across the hall. In the night, after all the lights were dimmed, I could hear the women giggling and conversing in their native language. The melodic words rose and fell like a tide from somber to giddy. Still, it was their laughter that punctuated the stillness deep into the night. Those evenings are etched deeply in my memory. Now, once again, I am a witness. I watch from my borderlands' vantage point as a sea of humanity rises again.

What I see in the "refugee caravans," as they have come to be known, is a moment that is wondrous, evolutionary, and radical, which simply means getting to the root of things. With every footfall, our neighbors are summoning us, those on the north side of the wall, to recognize our shared humanity. They are challenging us in the broad daylight to live up to the tenants of civil society, let alone, international law. They are making visible to the world's eyes what has been happening for decades. They are knocking on the door and will not be deterred.

I will not belabor statistics which are dulling to our sensibilities anyway. After all, who can reconcile that over 6,000 bodies have been recovered in the U.S. borderlands since 2000? Or grasp that at least six times that number have simply disappeared...vanished in the deserts and river valleys of the U.S. southwest. The caravans force our eyes wide open. There are faces behind the facts and stories beneath the sensational headlines. It behooves us to open the door.

Many of us in the north only see despair, destitution, and fear in the faces portrayed by the media. Others of us see hope, courage, and rugged determination despite the facts. Despair and hope are two sides of the same wall. So too fear and courage.

Oh, the walls we build! The unseen ones are the most formidable. Our attitudes are the foundation of these concrete border walls. Intention precedes construction. Who is really afraid? Who is desperate enough to call up the National Guard

and Army? Who recently put razor wire atop the wall? What are we afraid of? A couple thousand unarmed civilians? Our way of life? Our security?

If we only see despair and fear in the faces of the caravans, I sense we have likely, however subconsciously, succumbed to a privileged mindset. We have created another wall. An us-and-them. A duality, if not a hierarchy. We may respond to the media photos with clothing and canned food drives. Traditional generosity. Yes, shoes and soup are important. Yet can we go deeper? To the foundation? If we can, we see hope and courage in our neighbors' struggle and the power dynamic begins to shift. If we can recognize that even though the momentary circumstances are out of balance, our liberation is inexorably tied up with theirs. Our fate is ultimately woven together economically, politically, environmentally, and I dare say, spiritually, more than we can imagine. We need to hear their voices.

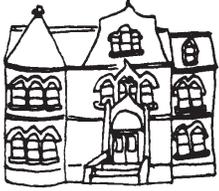
I believe the caravans are a vanguard to a new day. It invites international unity. No border enforcement can ultimately withstand a vision that offers hope so fundamental, let alone necessary, to healing our human condition. Walls can no more stop radical hope than they can protect us from our deepest fears. The mismatch of armed forces against unfettered human hope is absurd. And futile.

Every word I write is steeped in my privilege—my citizenship, my whiteness, my cis-maleness. This is my great disclaimer. Not an excuse, simply my reality. I am deeply fortunate to witness this great movement of humanity. It is a moment that will have consequences for both sides of every wall that is ever built. Those of stone, concertina wire, and steel. Those of fear, hate, and judgment.

The laughter of the women in the room across the hall at Casa Mariposa echoes. These winged ones sail right over walls, no matter the height. So too the caravans. Their hopes are already beyond the wall. And ultimately, this force is unstoppable. Indomitable. The best we can do is ally ourselves or get out of the path. And some hearty laughter along the way wouldn't hurt.



John Heid is a Quaker-Catholic Worker who calls the Sonoran Desert home, even though his heart still lingers in the heartland.



From Karen House

by Carly Spurlock

Dear extended Karen House family,

You all will receive this long after the holiday season is over, but as I write this, the holidays are just starting to wind down. A couple weeks ago, other community members and I were worried that we weren't going to get any gift card donations for the holiday season but of course, many friends showed up with hundreds of dollars' worth of gift cards. This meant that all of the mothers in the house were able to buy their kids Christmas presents and we were able to do a Secret Santa exchange between everyone in the house and in community. The house was overflowing with gifts and holiday treats brought to us by our friends and the St. Louis community. Our refrigerators and shelves were fuller than I've ever seen them. Every time I get bogged down and feeling alone and helpless in the work of the house, I am reminded of the undying generosity of our extended Karen House family. When we ask, you all are always there to help us out. You have made this holiday season so special for us all and I could not thank you enough. It's times like this holiday season that remind me what a wonderful house I have the privilege to live in and the absolutely incredible people that keep this place filled with love and warmth.

I want to extend an extra special thank you to Gregory, Tim, Colleen, Kristina, and Angie, who were instrumental in making Christmas happen at Karen House.

Now that we are looking forward into a new year, I would like to share some news of the house. Bad news first... The bed bugs that are infesting the house are particularly tenacious and have lived through a round of heat treatment and several rounds of spray treatments. We're still grappling with how to take care of this situation. Do we spend the thousands of dollars it would take to treat the entire house for a year? Do we continue with home remedies and hope for the best? What will happen if we get rid of this round of bed bugs and end up getting them again in a year or two? We may be calling upon you all, our friends and family, to help us fund additional treatment in the near future. But for now, you all can help us by cleaning, washing, and drying any donations (clothing, furniture, and otherwise) that you bring to the house. We do not have the capacity to be doing this ourselves when donations come to us, so if you're able to do this, we will



The mural hanging in Karen House's dining room.

Source: Karen House

feel more certain that additional bugs are not coming into the house.

Now for the good news: I'm very excited to report that Jenny Truax is using her creative energy to help bring new faces into the Karen House community! In the next several months, Karen House will be hosting small groups of people to stay overnight at the house, participate in meals and other small projects, share in dialogue with Karen House community, and get a feel for what life is like living at Karen House. To do this, Jenny has been working with directors of service programs in St. Louis to invite participants of the programs to these overnight experiences. We are hoping that making a connection between other service programs and Karen House will create larger community between us all and may also draw in new community members for the house. If you or someone you know is interested in coming to one of these overnight experiences, please reach out to us at karenhousecw@gmail.com; we'd love to have you!

I will leave you with one last thought. A movement that I am a part of greets each other with the word "uhuru," a Swahili word meaning "freedom." We use the word as a greeting and farewell because we should always have freedom at the forefront of our minds. So, uhuru. May we all have the wellbeing and freedom of all people on our minds as we move into a new year.

Warmly,

Carly + Karen House Community



The Round Table

Karen Catholic Worker House

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SPREAD THE WORD! KAREN HOUSE NEEDS COMMUNITY MEMBERS!

The primary need at Karen House right now is for more Community Members! Community Members live in the house in our intentional community and work together to coordinate our hospitality.

Would you or someone you know be interested in considering this opportunity?
Here's a few ways to get to know us!

1. Check out our Introduction to Karen House Flyer!

The flyer is available on our website: karenhousecw.org or email us and we'll send it to you (karenhousecw@gmail.com). It includes information about our intentional community, and a copy of our values statement.

2. Consider Volunteering!

Come cook a meal or learn to take house! Info on this is available on our website, and you can contact us to learn more.

3. Participate in an Overnight Experience!

This is an experiential opportunity to learn more about Karen House, contribute to our work of hospitality, and reflect on the relationship between service and justice. We will host a group of 3-6 folks to do some reflecting, working, cooking, eating, and sharing at Karen House in an overnight experience. Apply for the overnight experience on our website.

MORE ON KAREN HOUSE

- Our website (karenhousecw.org) is a great way to learn about us! It includes our Values Statement, a history of the St. Louis Catholic Worker, and dozens (hundreds?) of resources on consensus decision making, anti-racism work, and Catholic Worker philosophy.
- We update our needs list, and our Amazon wishlist frequently- check them out.
- We depend completely on you, our extended family to pay the bills, cook the meals, sort the donations, and do all the work of hospitality - a HUGE THANK YOU for your support!