A HARSH AND DREADFUL LOVE

Illustration by Ashley Verkamp
After 3 years with the Catholic Worker, I was exhausted & burned out.
They cut through four fences and walked for over two hours in what supposedly was a highly secured and patrolled area to gain access to the nuclear weapons plant.

**TRANSFORM NOW PLOWSHARES**

Mike Walli, Sr. Megan Rice, Greg Boerje-Obed

CATHOLIC WORKER 80th ANNIVERSARY

BRADLEY MANNING

SAVING THE SOUL OF AMERICA

By DAVID OMONDI

It is sadly ironic that Pfc. Manning’s sentence was based on his term of service in the US military, and he has still not been tried. Arrested only eight short months after his deployment to Iraq for leaking thousands of classified documents, Manning leaked audio records from the infamous “Collateral Murder” video, he told the court in February that he was attempting to show “the true cost of war.”

It is sadly ironic that Manning was arrested after confiding in and being reassured by a known hacker. Online conversations with Adrian Lamo describe some events that led to his decision to leak information: he was instructed by a superior to assist the Iraqi police in finding more detaine
es after they arrested 15 men for dissociating anti-Iraqi insurgency. Manning discovered that these men were merely following a corruption trial in the Iraqi cabinet, but his reports were rejected and he was told to help find more “bad guys.” It was then that he knew he was “actively involved in something [he] was completely opposed to.”

Contrary to claims that he sought to aid the enemy—charges which is based on serious outstanding charge against him, Manning told Lamo that he was a “smart, honest, and straight-forward”—Manning told Lamo that if he were “someone more malicious [he] could have sold the material to Russia or China and made bank.” But told him it was because he was “lacking the skills” needed to be made accessible to the public to expose the truth of what is being done in our name. At least the major judicial Col. Denise Lind has
The poet and English teacher Rich-ard Nester is among the friends of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker. He recently spent one week living and working with the LACW.

By RICHARD NESTER

O ne thing I can do after 32 years of teaching English is analyze language. I even know a fancy word for the process. Language pros call it “de-construction.” It involves reversing the process of constructing meaning so that we can recognize the assumptions that led to its initial creation. Sometimes it is a make-work project for professors, but more often it is a creative first step in making sure we are not trapped in a circle of platitudes and misunderstanding. You see, while language is a powerful tool for discovering and communicating truth, it is not perfect. It has the capacity to hide things or make us see what is not there. To deconstruct language is to lift the curtain, to go behind the scenes, like a magi-cian who shows us how the trick is done.

On the first day of a recent sojourn at the Catholic Worker, I was reminded that Los Angeles city officials have labeled those who serve the poor “homeless enablers.” It is a particularly stinging rebuke because it implies that the charitable are so misguided that they cannot appreci-ate the underlying cause and effect relationships in their actions. Instead of bringing hope, they are actually prolonging and deepening despair.

The metaphor serves a dual purpose, letting users vent their spleen over what they consider useless char-ity while identifying themselves as astute and practical thinkers, above the sentimentality of those who have only a street-level view of the problem. Deconstructing the epithet “homeless enabler” will let us see why it is inaccurate and what real-ity is.

The concept of “enabling” helps us understand the social dynamics of addiction and abuse and explain why these problems are so intrac-tible. In the enabling scenario, addicts or abusers are shielded from the consequences of their actions by people close to them, and thus have no incentive to change their destruc-tive behavior. An example of such a scenario might be when an abused spouse calls the cops but never files charges, letting the perpetrator off the hook. In these situations, the victims are seen as abetting the behavior because they never take positive action to change it.

This example shows, the concept of enabling explains a great deal. But even so, its explanatory reach de-pends on powerful, yet nearly invis-ible assumptions. For the victims, there would have to imagine that change is possible. However, those harmed are often in no position to do this. Per-haps their experience tells them that their suffering is natural or inevi-table, or they are so exhausted by the process that even small steps seem virtually impossible. Additionally, change itself is difficult. Even Ham-let in his lugubriousness or prince of Denmark wondered if he ought not “bear the evils” he knew rather than exchange them for uncertainties.

How much more difficult it must be for someone who has only known the abused life? Moreover, change can be dangerous. Experts have identi-fied the time immediately after the abused victim leaves as the most dangerous period of all, even more dangerous than putting up with the stats quo. Without safe havens, es-capade may not be worth the risk.

Thus, we see that the concept of enabling, for all its explanatory power, may be limited and that its use runs the hazard of blaming the victim. Even so, there is more powerful reason why the concept of enable-ment makes no sense for the situation of homelessness. That is because it is a metaphor, not an obvious one, but a metaphor all the same. It compares public situation to a private one.

The idea of enabling was devised for private situations in scenarios where some freedom of choice, however limited, exists, and alternate behaviors are possible, if difficult. Homelessness is a public problem, and until sufficient af-fordable housing is available, there is simply nowhere else to go. The enabling factor in homelessness is ac-tually the lack of homes and not the assistance given to those caught in the situation. The true enablers are those that resist appeals for housing justice. Can anyone truly believe that homelessness is so enticing that giving someone a free meal provides a reason for remaining homeless if other options are available? Call-ing Catholic Workers “homeless enablers” makes no more sense than blaming bridges for the fact that the homeless sometimes sleep under them. Is the city of Los Angeles a “homeless enabler” because it main-tains its bridges?

Home is much more than a roof over one’s head. It is a network of social connections of the sort Robert Frost describes in his dramatic poem, “Death of a Hired Man,” which includes his definition of home as a place where “when you have to go there, they have to take you in.” Many homeless have not experienced those kinds of connections in their entire lives, or if they have, they may have lost them. In any case, there are few, even among those most to blame, who feel responsible. No one has to take the homeless in, and in most cases no one does.

So do not imagine homelessness as a kind of elaborate camping out. If you are one of life’s lucky ones, like me, you will need to imagine what it is like without caring parents or safe communities that in my case stretch back generations. Loss of a roof that keeps the rain off would be but the first of many losses I would have to endure before I would be as destitute as those that the L.A. Catholic Worker is accused of enabling. If anything the L.A. Catholic Worker is a living “homeless enabler,” the recognition of the kind of connections for which government at many levels has disavowed responsibility.

And please do not try to resurrect romantic notions about the existen-tial freedom of the road, what blues singer Bill Bozey called “the key to the highest justice.” People do not do with the contemporary “pursuit of happiness.” That idea of homelessness-ness only exists on phonograph re-cords. The Tom Joads of the modern world hit the highway because they had to, not because they wanted to. If homelessness were limited to those who actually prefer the hard road to a soft bed, there would be few homeless.

Does the failure of “homeless ena-bling” as a logical construct mean that all metaphors are suspect? Plato did not like them much, principally because they tell us only what a thing is like, not what it is. However, metaphor has an important place in logic. One thing the grievious metaphor’s ability to enlarge under-standing is the number and aptness of its points of comparison. Let us examine the relative accuracy of another metaphor. Dorothy Day, described homelessness as a “slow crucifixion.” This metaphor is far more apt than most of us would like to imagine. First, homelessness is physically brutal. There is the ceaseless search for a place of rest away from pavements and police harass-ment. Additionally, it is psychologi-cally painful, intensely so, shameful in the way that ancient crucifixion was, designed to put people beyond the pale of human mercy and under-standing. Finally, capitalism uses homelessness the same way Romans used the cross— as a warning to the rest of us to walk society’s economic straight and narrow.

In another metaphor—not directly expressed, but certainly lived—Day saw the poor as “mindfulness enablers” because contact with them keeps our hearts open to how far short of justice we live. In fact, there is a poetry to the entire Catholic Worker project because it aims at transformation, a transfor-mation of society that begins as a transfor-mation of the individual heart. To serve well requires an intense mindfulness. If we cannot make the “I-thou leap of faith,” recognizing ourselves in the poor and the poor in ourselves, we see no collective. The more we harden our hearts to our- selves in the poor and the poor in ourselves, the more we harden our hearts to our- selves. To serve well requires the “I-thou leap of faith,” recognizing ourselves in the poor and the poor in ourselves, we see no collective.

Calling things by their right names does not cure us as we might think. We live in an age of advertising. In dividually and collectively, we have become masterful at applying the word or phrase that most easily and cleverly fits, or something more accurate? Institu-tions that increase the misery of the poor and the poor in ourselves. Do not try to resurrect the contemporary “pursuit of happiness.” That idea of homelessness-ness only exists on phonograph re-cords. The Tom Joads of the modern world hit the highway because they had to, not because they wanted to. If homelessness were limited to those who actually prefer the hard road to a soft bed, there would be few homeless.

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By DOROTHY DAY

It is not true to say that we are
never to turn to others for help.
We need other people to help us,
and we should not hesitate to ask for
the help of others. This is not only
true of the people who need help,
but it is also true of the people who
are able to help. The people who
can help are often even more
important than the people who
need help, because they can help
us to see what we need to do to help
ourselves and others.

A personal way of helping others is
through the Church. The Church is
a community of people who help
each other. The Church is also a
place where people can find help.
The Church is not only a place where
people can find help, but it is also
a place where people can give help.
The Church is a place where people
can work together to help others.
The Church is a place where people
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If we had Christ's own words in
for it, it would seem very easy to
believe that if we offer a bed and
food and hospitality for Christ—or
for any other person, for that matter—
to some man, woman, or child, we
are fulfilling the part of love and
mercifulness to Christ. There is nothing
to show it is not so. There are stories
daily growing around their heads—that at
least once in every story there is some
to see. It is not likely that it shall be
unnoticed the kindness of Honorius
who put the leper in her bed and
laid him to tend him, nor the
lower the ladder's stretch fork, but the
face of Christ. The part of the
benevolence of the mother will go on
taking in strangers, and
and the continual hospitality He
expected of Mary. The Church
welcomed with love, drawn by the
arms of Christ—God's love for
human beings.

It would be foolish to pretend that
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Jeff Dietrich is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member and editor of the Agitator.

OMONDI, cont'd from p.2

rule that prosecutors will have to prove Manning's conduct and that information leaked could harm the United States and that he intended to "aid the enemy" before the trial began.

When it was revealed that Manning has been dealing with mental health issues since 2007, his lawyers have argued that he is not responsible for his actions and should not be held accountable.

Manning's case has been closely watched by those who believe that whistle-blowers should be protected for their actions.

Dietrich, cont'd from p.1

California, and she was under court order to remain in the state. Consequently, we stayed away from us for two weeks. Moreover, I still had the green milk van and did everything I could to keep the peace. I always already decided to leave the Catholic Worker and led quite a quiet life among us. Therefore, when Dorothy departed, I immediately announced to the community. In response, Sister Catherine Morris told me the community that she would be leaving as well. Afterwards I walked her out to her little yellow flat. And I had sensed that Catherine might have some interest in me, but she was a nun and it would have been an occasion of sin to allow my thoughts to linger on her. By the way, I had a good reason to say that Catherine might have some interest in me, but she was a nun and it would have been an occasion of sin to allow my thoughts to linger on her. By the way, I had a good reason to say that.

As long as I could think, I knew that we were not married to a woman who actually of sin to allow my thoughts to linger on her. By the way, I had a good reason to say that.

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GENOCIDE CHARGED

In April, Lakota tribal elders, mostly grandchildren, began a campaign to gain support for a formal complaint of genocide against the U.S. government and constituent states. On April 9, the Lakota Truth Tour delegation were blocked by U.N. security officers from presenting Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s office a notice of charges against the U.S. under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

As evidence, the Lakota cite systemic U.S. usurpation of their land and sovereignty rights, imposition of third-world living conditions on the majority of their Lakota, U.S. assimilation policies that threaten the future of their families and cultural identity, and environmental depredations including abandonment of open uranium mines across the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline slated to invade the Pine Ridge Rese- dential Lakota grandmother and their allies in the Lakota Solidarity Project have even produced a powerful, full-length documentary, Red Cry, available on DVD or online at www.lakotagrandmothers.org/media.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate scientists have warned that escalating climate change will continue to be a frequent and fiercer storms as time moves forward. Change is a moral issue above all else. Energy supplies will diminish, causing prices to rise beyond the reach of many. International conflicts will rise and wars multiply. These facts should convince us that climate change is a moral issue above all else. We have the power to stop these catastrophic scenarios if we act now and force those in power to immediately end fossil fuel dependence.

GUANTANAMO UPDATE

As of this writing, according to the military, 36 of the approximately 130 detainees on a hunger strike are now being tortuously force-fed, with one in serious condition in hospital. The hunger strike shows absolutely no signs of ending, despite President Obama’s rhetoric about closing Guantanamo.

Prisoners Writ of Habeas Corpus

The 166 prisoners, detained in unjust in time for a wonderful Seder celebration, would have attended there would be no need to explain the unbridled joyous celebration; if not, suffice to say that the Seder Hall was packed with new and old friends dancing, singing, reciting, praying, talking, feasting, and thanks to and generally praising God.

We said farewell to our amazing Catholic Worker Gathering in Kent, Ohio, on May Day, the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Catholic Work- er Movement. We were welcomed at the Entrepreneur Agency operations in the east coast, an organization dedicated to planning and delivering much needed services to imprisoned fathers desperately seeking to spend time and needed services to imprisoned fathers, visited. Carol had arrived in California to consult with state prison officials about expanding her very successful children’s “summer in camp” program to spend much needed bonding time with their imprisoned fathers. She dropped by our downtown garden to spend time talking and reminiscing with Cath- erine. We wished continued success to Carol and her wonderful organization.

On a gorgeous spring evening Martha and Catherine presided over a moving Baptismal ceremony for new members of the First Christian Church. One of former community member Alecia Stuchblick and long time friend Ed Pilotta. Martha had just married the heating of water and Catherine used a cool chunk cake, made by yours truly, for the lighting portion of the ceremony. Alecia sang a special song she had written for baby and I prepared a fabu- lous feast for the occasion, including a rich chocolate cake, made by yours truly, for the lighting portion of the ceremony. Alecia sang a special song she had written for baby and I prepared a fabu- lous feast for the occasion, including a rich chocolate cake, made by yours truly, for the lighting portion of the ceremony. Alecia sang a special song she had written for baby and I prepared a fabu- lous feast for the occasion, including a rich chocolate cake, made by yours truly, for the lighting portion of the ceremony. 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A DAY AT THE PARK
WE NEED YOUR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

During the summer we rent buses to take our homeless friends on an old-fashioned picnic. However, we need your financial assistance to make this enjoyable experience a reality.

Please help with a generous donation.

Thank you. Many blessings.

JOIN US FOR OUR WEDNESDAY EVENING LITURGY

If you are not aware, or aware but never seriously thought about it, or have not attended in awhile, we invite and welcome you to join us for our ecumenical home liturgy every Wednesday, 6pm at Hennacy House, followed by a potluck dinner. Our liturgies vary from having ordained ministers/priests presiding or a lay presider depending on availability of our ordained friends. Our homilies/sermons are shared participation, which means everyone is welcome (but not obligated) to briefly share their thoughts and insights on the scripture passages used. After liturgy we socialize over dinner. It is a pleasant and rewarding evening. A good way to spend Wednesday evenings this summer...and beyond.

632 N. Brittania St., Los Angeles, 90033 • Phone 323-267-8789

HELP NEEDED

Veterans for Peace, who each weekend, just north of the Santa Monica pier, set up Arlington West, a stunning and moving memorial for U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, desperately needs volunteers to help erect and take down the thousands of crosses and other symbols and memorabilia that remember and honor the dead. Please consider giving some of your time for this meaningful and momentous project. See: www.arlingtonwestsantamonica.org for more info.