Jessica and Ruby recently went public, admitting that they had been the ones to commit a number of acts of sabotage against the $3.6 billion Dakota Access Pipeline. Jessica and Ruby burned a number of pieces of heavy machinery used to construct the pipeline and damaged a number of valves on the pipeline itself.

So the question is,

**IS PROPERTY DESTRUCTION VIOLENT OR NONVIOLENT?**

NEW POOR PEOPLE’S CAMPAIGN p.2
Our continued reliance on these technologies is a death warrant for life on earth. What is property? Is property destruction violent or nonviolent?

By THEO KAYSER

The recent debate in Catholic Worker circles about property destruction as a tactic to resist war-making and other social ills has caused an uproar in our strongly opinionated international community. The argument was (re)ignited this past December with an article published in the New York Catholic Worker by longtime CW Tom Cornell in which he revisited many of the arguments used against activists, specifically the Berrigans and other Plowshares practitioners who take the words of the prophet Isaiah literally and “beat swords into plowshares” (Is 2:4), using property destruction as a tactic to resist war-making and other social ills. The response was huge, with dozens of Catholic Workers, former and current, weighing in on the topic. Many inferred that Cornell’s article was less inspired by the events of years or decades ago than by the recent actions of contemporary Catholic Workers Jessica Reznicek and Ruby Montoya of the Des Moines Catholic Worker. The two recently went public, admitting that they had been the ones to commit a number of acts of sabotage against the $3.6 billion Dakota Access Pipeline. Jessica and Ruby burned a number of pieces of heavy machinery used to construct the pipeline and damaged a number of valves on the pipeline itself. Whether or not these inferences were correct, conversations began to focus on their actions.

So the question is, is property destruction violent or nonviolent? Everyone had an opinion. Some said yes, some said no, some said sometimes. One response even suggested that it was more important to ask whether or not it is Christian. Few rocks have been left unturned as the conversation sifted through the intricacies of nonviolence.

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By THEO KAYSER

Continued on page 2

The powers of this dark world and the rulers against authorities, against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers and principalities, Christians are prone to downplay their influence upon the world, even to the point of outright ignoring or denying their existence. The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” A number of us at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker have for years now tried to wrestle with understanding these powers and principalities and have turned to the work of theologian William Stringfellow for help.

I sometimes describe the principalities and powers as the spiritual reality of institutions. I have heard them related as mob mentality—that a group is always less moral than an individual. The Bible calls them by many names, among them demons, angels, lords, dominions, gods, thrones, authority. As Stringfellow writes, “They include all institutions, all ideologies, all images, all movements, all causes, all corporations, all bureaucracies, all traditions, all methods and routines, all conglomerates, all races, all nations, all idols. Thus, the Pentagon or Ford Motor Company or Harvard University or the Hudson Institute or Consolidated Edison or the Diners Club or the Olympics or the Methodist Church or...”
Photo by Rozella Apel

2 / FEBRUARY 2018

One of its 50th birthday is for anyone. But Tensie Hernandez’s 50th birthday was not only a milestone for her but for the L.A. Catholic Worker as well as our network of Sister House communities. In 1985 Tensie, at age 17, was very first summer intern, and she has been with the movement ever since. For the past 21 years Tensie along with her husband, Dennis Apel, have been at the Guadalupe Catholic Worker as well as our network of Sister House communities. In 1985, Tensie, at age 17, was very first summer intern, and she has been with the movement ever since.

Property is considered sacred. As Christians, our correct relationship to the powers and principals has been one of desacralization. Any act that restores life to its rightful place, above the survival of ideology or institutions, is a desacralizing act and thus a life-affirming act. We can do this in different ways. Catholic Workers have long had a tradition of desacralizing property. At our best, we denounced it as a way of life and attempt to remove ourselves from a system of property (or at least property’s most extreme form, private ownership), a radical act in a world where property is status and moral worth. In a world where we are taught that owning things is what protects us and sustains us, giving away property is an other way of lessening its grip on us.

And destroying property, breaking rules, property, challenging who has sovereignty over property and its use, is yet another way to desacralize property. The Holy Spirit is versatile.

I will not pretend to have the last word on what does or does not constitute nonviolence action. Nonviolence is also a principal- ity. If it calls us to do something other than what Christ demands of us, which is ultimately always the service of life, then it has supplanted the Word of God in our moral focus and has become an idol. Just like any other principality, nonviolence would have you believe that following it is the ultimate way of following the Word of God or that non- violence has the power to save the world. Again, I do not think I am putting down nonviolence in and of itself or suggesting it be incompatible with a Christian life per se. What I do hope to instill is that, as Christians, to attribute salvation to any other thing than the Word of God is idolatry. As Christians, we have a responsibility to confront the powers and principalities in their vanity. In the end, our problem is not evil people in high places, though they may exist. The much greater threat to our world is those who have been literally de- moralized by the powers and prin- cipalities, those who live, by either constant assault or happy assimilation, in moral paralysis. In a world where we have been willing to be paraded along by the powers, even to the brink of death, literally all we have to do to destroy the planet and millions of lives with it is to do what we are already doing. Hope can be found in those who are not conformed—those who break the rules of systems to save lives. Too much time and ink has been spent critiquing those who have acted. The power of death is militant in our world. We cannot afford not to act.

Theo Kaysen is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member.

TENSIE HAPPY BIRTHDAY

VIOLENT OR NONVIOLENT?

KAUSER, cont’d from p.1

the Teamsters Unions are all principalities. So are capitalism, Maosun, humanism, Mormonism, astrology, the Puritan work ethic, science, scientism, white supremacy, patrio- tism, and many more—sports, sex, and profession or discipline, technology, money, the family—all beyond any enumeration. The principalities and powers are legion.

Property, as an ideology (as well as the related principalities of wealth and money) is ubiquitous today in this na- tion, so much so that it is nearly invis- ible, seemingly beyond time and place, a universal reality, an inalienable right. There are societies where property does not carry this kind of weight or weightlessness. There are exist as part of the social arrangement. (Not least for Christians, among the alternative outlooks is the witness of the Hebrew Scriptures, where we are warned against property. The Psalmist sings, “The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, and the law maintains, “The land must not be sold perma- nently, because the land is mine.”) But property naturally becomes so much a part of our culture and how we see the world that it has be- come the focus of our way of imagining life without it.

It is not my intention to portray property and its role in itself as a bad thing; its relative faults or merits are not the focus of this essay. In fact, Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin was fond of property held both communally (with a philosophy of the common Good) and privately (the thought everyone should have some and was prone to talk about property responsibility before property rights). The concern of the essay is to be an invoca- tion that exists between the powers, including property, and life. The powers and principalities are created to serve life in all that entails, but exist in real time, the era known to Christians as “the fall,” an era marked by alienation from, confusion about, and disarray against life. Made to serve life, they are confused about their vocation and assume the role of God. Considering themselves to be absolute, the existence of the powers and principalities, they said, is in itself, an imperious. No longer the system a means to an end, but an end in and of itself, an end for which it is justified to sacrifice even human life. When this is the case, everything can only be described as in the service of death.

The principalities, including prop- erty, are not to be taken absolutely. You are justified if you have property. You are a person if you have property. It matters little how you get it, how you choose to use or squander or even needlessly destroy it. To have much to possess virtue and, inversely, to have none to be deficient. Property has been and is used to determine human worth. At the founding of the U.S., as well as in ideological predicaments of the Roman Republic and Athenian De- mocracy, full recognition and participa- tion in civic life required property ownership. And lest we forget, the founding document of our country allows for humans to be held as prop- erty, and to be treated as less than fully human. While the U.S. Decla- ration of Independence talks about rights to life, liberty, and happiness, it was codified in the U.S. Constitution as life, liberty, and property, formally justifying property ownership with life itself. We reinforce this when we consider damage to property as violence akin to violence against persons, i.e. violence against life.
The following interview with Jessica Reznick and Ruby Montoya is “surprisingly” reprinted from an interview by Amy Goodman, which aired July 28, 2017, on her program, Democracy Now! We had intended to conduct our own interview with Jess and Ruby, but they were unavailable.

GOODMAN: We turn now to Iowa, where two Catholic Workers have revealed they secretly carried out multiple acts of sabotage and arson in recent months in order to stop construction of the controversial $3.8 billion Dakota Access Pipeline. Des Moines Catholic Worker, taken in Buena Vista County, Iowa. I definitely took a lot of photographs, and I said to myself, ‘Standing Rock. But Iowa is impacted greatly by this, and my home city’s drinking water is to be destroyed by this pipeline. And so it’s not a matter of having to find it. It’s right—it found me.'

GOODMAN: So, the destruction into the damage to the pipeline has been ongoing. But, apparently, the authorities did not have leads into who committed these acts of sabotage. So, Jessica, why did you decide, you and Ruby decide, to come forward on Monday?

REZNICEK: Well. I guess one of the main reasons is Ruby and I felt very disheartened by the fact that oil is now flowing through the pipeline. Obviously, we cannot pierce through empty valves anymore. They are sealed. We halited construction up and down the line for several weeks, turning into months. And we’re now at the phase where we have to deal with the reality that the pipeline is—that we failed, as resistance here in Iowa goes. And now oil is flowing through it, and there’s really nothing more to do than come forward and let the public know that—and continue this public discourse about what that means, where we’re headed, and the consequences of it.

GOODMAN: Ruby, you talked about beginning this action of sabotage on election night. Why the significance of that? Why November 8th?

And then talk about what happened on election night. Why the significance of this day, Election Day?

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The fifty-something woman with my locks. Two weeks of foot care for our guests. I need you for all the crazy people. I need you for all those who suffer by you. Teach me to pray on this side of the beyond words and beyond names. This could result in a catastrophic democratic People’s Republic of Corea. Aside from the peace expedition that was sent to the U.S., the People’s Democratic Party, who is arranged will be one of the first targets. “THAAD” (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) is a U.S. missile intercept strategy against China and Russia. If war breaks out, the town where the THAAD system is arranged will be one of the first targets. In accordance with Trump’s visit to South Corea, a flare-up of anti-war movement called Anti-Trump Day. An anti-war protest was held on November 7, in those nuclear-possessed Corean Baltic Sites, where the coreans were placed at the Corean peninsula. If there is war, it will be the end of the world. It is impossible to think of what will happen. In Corea’s national defense budget on November 7, as three nuclear-possessed Corean Baltic Sites, where the Coreans were placed at the Corean peninsula, it could be an unprecedented nuclear war that will spread to the entire world.

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They are accessing underneath the seams, it is a lot more easy to find these ex-hausting their financial means so that they would stop with this pipeline. GOODMAN: Now, Jessica Reznick, there are many who would say that destroying private property like this is violence. Your response to this? REZNICEK: I completely disagree. I believe that they are taking it out of the ground and the machinery that does it and the infrastructure which supports it, that this is violent. This is—those tools and these mechanisms that industry and corporate power and government power have all colluded together to create, this is destructive, this is violent, and it needs to be stopped. And we never at all threatened human life. We never at all—and, actually, we’re acting in an effort to save human life, to save our planet, to save our resources. And nothing at any point was ever done by Ruby nor I in anything outside of peaceful, nonviolent action. GOODMAN: Can you explain what these workshares actions are, for those who don’t know? You are both Catholic Workers. Jessica Reznick starting an encampment on the Mississippi River bore site. And I went there because I knew that there were not a lot of people there. GOODMAN: Jessica, how did you get involved with the Catholic Worker movement? REZNICEK: I met the Catholic Workers in Des Moines when they were at the forefront of the local Occupy movement at the Iowa State Capitol. Originally, I dropped out of college and went to Zuccotti Park to Occupy in New York. I received a call from a cousin in Des Moines who said, “Hey, there’s this group occupying Des Moines right now.” And so I came back to Des Moines. I started volunteering at the Catholic Worker—we have a soup kitchen that’s open five days a week—then moved in, and it’s been quite the journey ever since.

MONToya: I actually met Jes- sica on the Mississippi River. Prior to that, I was a preschool teacher in Boulder, Colorado. I read about the Dakota Access pipeline. I read about what they were intending to do, to put these dirty petroleum pipes underneath our major water- ways here in the United States. And I was aghast by their intentions. So I quit my job, and I went to Standing Rock. And I was greatly comforted by the amount of people that were there, the amount of helping hands ready to do resistance work and community work. And I was follow- ing the Dakota Access pipeline so closely that I found out about Jessica Reznick starting an encampment on the Mississippi River bore site. And I went there because I knew that there were not a lot of people there. GOODMAN: Jessica, what do you think of the Catholic Worker movement? REZNICEK: I met the Catholic Workers in Des Moines when they were at the forefront of the local Occupy movement at the Iowa State Capitol. Originally, I dropped out of college and went to Zuccotti Park to Occupy in New York. I received a call from a cousin in Des Moines who said, “Hey, there’s this group occupying Des Moines right now.” And so I came back to Des Moines. I started volunteering at the Catholic Worker—we have a soup kitchen that’s open five days a week—then moved in, and it’s been quite the journey ever since.

BETTER KNOW A VOLUNTEER

Better Know a Volunteer is written by Sarah Fuller and Theo Keyser.

Maria was born and raised in Sonora, Mexico. She made Southern California her home, married her husband, and raised four children, four grandchildren, and two “grand-dogs.” Maria has been a volunteer at the Hippie Kitchen for 12 years. She saw an ad in her church newspaper, St. Jerome’s.

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MILITARIZED POLICE AND BRUTALITY

If you wonder why this nation's police departments are so brutal against certain individuals and groups, besides systemic racism, another reason most likely lies in the fact that more than 300 high-ranking sheriffs and police from agencies large and small—from New York and Maine to Orange County and Oakland, California—have traveled to Israel for seminars in what is described as counterterrorism Techniques. These include training on crowd control, use of force, and surveillance, taught by Israel's national police, military and intelligence services.

Many of these trips are taxpayer-funded, while others are privately funded. Since 2002, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the United States Civil Rights Commission, and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs have paid for police chiefs, assistant chiefs, and captains to train in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). As these trips to Israel became more commonplace, the militarization of U.S. law enforcement also was driven by the creation of various homeland security initiatives and billions of dollars of surplus military-grade equipment donated to local departments through the 1033 Program implemented after the September 11 attacks.

FAITH AND RESISTANCE

Each year the Pacific Life Community, a network of spiritually motivated advocates for nuclear abolition and human rights, who are committed to ending the threat of nuclear weapons in war making through nonviolent direct action, gathered in Montreal for a three-day faith and resistance retreat to build community, share experiences, participate in workshops, and plan nonviolent direct action at a local weapons manufacturer, military base, nuclear weapons laboratory, or a site where nuclear weapons are stored or tested.

This year’s gathering will be hosted by the Nevada Desert Experience and Las Vegas Catholic Worker. It will be held from March 2-4 in Las Vegas, centered at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker. There is no fee for this event (food, housing, etc.) but donations are very much appreciated. For more info, and to view the schedule and register visit pacificlifecommunity.wordpress.com or call 702-647-0728 or e-mail mail@1wc.org if you have questions.

GIRL FORCED INTO GAZA CAGE

A 14-year-old Palestinian girl who had never before entered the open-air prison of Gaza, found herself being forcefully dumped there by Israeli officials—all, at night, and without her parents being informed. The terrifying ordeal was just another routine error. One mishap among many that day.

This girl, Ghada, who suffers from epilepsy, was arrested last month by the court. She was wrongfully as a Gaza resident, who had no knowledge of what had happened to her the entire time.

Besides her anguish, protests, she was forced through the electronic fence into the cage of Gaza. She was terrorized—afraid of being alone, of the dark, of fences, and of watchtowers. She is also a child who needs regular medical care, but no Israeli official cared. Palestinians are viewed as numbers and bodies rather than human beings.

After being held for two weeks, she was finally released by order of a judge and returned to her parents, who had no knowledge of what had happened to her the entire time.

Sadly, there is no legal or political remedy for Palestinian families and their children to bring their public and private mourning, and the restlessness they are forced to endure under the Israeli occupation forces.
Every year during the Christmas season the L.A. Catholic Worker is the grateful beneficiary of our donors’ incredible gifts of donations and support.

Our Christmas season always begins with the St. Paul High School March for Hunger. For the past 45 years students, faculty, parents, and alumni of St. Paul High School have been our largest single contributors.

And for many years, St. John Bosco High School students, who are longtime volunteers at our soup kitchen, do their own fundraisers collecting money, socks, jackets, and blankets for our guests.

In addition, we can never thank our faithful readership enough for your financial support and your heartfelt words and prayers, as well as the socks, gloves, canes, calendars, stamps, and many other items you have donated. We are humbled and encouraged by your outpouring of support. We offer many blessings upon each and all.

GOOD FRIDAY ANTI-WAR STATIONS OF THE CROSS
March 30 • 3:00pm
Please join the LACW for our annual Stations of the Nonviolent Cross. Meet at the Edward Roybal Federal Building - 255 E. Temple St., L.A. 90012

SEDER OF LIBERATION
Sunday, April 8 • 3 to 8pm
Throop Unitarian Universalist Church, 300 South Los Robles Ave., Pasadena, 91101

2018 SACRED PEACE WALK — MARCH 24 - 30
Walk in the footsteps of a long legacy of peace walkers and spiritual leaders to draw attention to the nuclear dangers that continue to threaten our planet, and the violent drones that monthly continue to kill people and damage the community of life in the desert. Please join us in transforming fears into compassion, and apathy into action during NDE’s annual Sacred Peace Walk from Las Vegas to the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS).
For registration forms see: nevadadesertexperience.org