



Rochester Catholic Worker

Our email address has changed to: st.joes@frontier.com

Rochester, New York — Spring 2014

The Underside of Justice - Harry Murray

Venture under the Hall of Justice in downtown Rochester and you will see the Underside of Justice, a cavernous concrete enclosure which for decades has been Rochester's most accessible homeless shelter, the Civic Center Garage. The time that Monroe County reluctantly provided a warm, if not very comfortable shelter for anyone who needed a place to sleep appears to be coming to a close.

Ever since I first came to St. Joe's in 1981, I have heard of people sleeping in the garage at night. Periodically, people would be evicted or arrested, and the place would clear out for awhile, but, inevitably, people would drift back and the cycle would start again.

From the point of view of a homeless person, the garage had many advantages – it was centrally located, there were no rules except that you had to be out by 6AM before paying patrons started to arrive and it was relatively warm in winter. It was so large that people were not crowded in together – one could almost always count on a place to sleep that was not too close to anyone else. There were disadvantages, of course – no beds and no bathroom facilities chief among them.

We first started hearing rumors that the garage would be closed to homeless persons last spring. The City called a series of meetings for various "constituents" to discuss the situation beginning in April of



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Civic Center Garage

How Did it Happen? - Paul Frasier

How did "it" happen? I invite readers to raise this question and offer your reflection: what took place in Germany after WW I so that the vast, evil, people-driven machinery of exterminating millions of Jews took place?

And apply the same question today: What is taking place – or NOT taking place in the U.S. today – that leads to the targeted assassination of people around the world by reaper drones, drones that operate out of Hancock Air National Guard a few miles away, just outside Syracuse, NY.

I don't know the answer to the first question. Here are some thoughts: Rebuilding war-torn, defeated Germany after WWI factors in. Fierce nationalism. Scapegoating and targeting a people that had for hundreds of years been targeted. I recently read that Columbus sailed from Spain on poor ships and second-rate sailors because the good ships and sailors were being used

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An RAF Reaper drone

The Underside of Justice *(continued from p. 1)*

2013. Tom Malthaner and I attended, as did Sister Grace Miller and a number of representatives of the House of Mercy. Also present was the owner of MAPCO, the company that manages the garage, which is owned by the Monroe County Civic Center Local Development Corporation, with a chair appointed by the County Executive.

MAPCO said they planned to buy new doors which would exclude homeless persons during the night. This was projected to happen in November, just as winter would be setting in. With the old subway mostly blocked off, this would close the last major place in the city where homeless people could spend the night in relative warmth without official supervision.



Sister Grace in the garage.

We objected vigorously, arguing that the County and City needed to provide a new downtown shelter, with minimal rules, before they evicted people from the garage. We urged that Rochester follow the model of Syracuse, which created the Oxford Inn back in 1979. The City pushed for individual level casework to "place" the 30 or so people in the garage in already existing shelters (which are full each night) or permanent housing, ignoring, we thought, the fact that garage residents are a continuously shifting "population," with constant coming and going.

On November 6, Judge Craig Doran wrote a letter to the Civic Center LDC and MAPCO demanding that they solve the problem:

"Action must be taken immediately in order to ensure the safety of our employees, the public traveling to and from our courts, and those using the garage for shelter. ... We remain willing to entertain any reasonable proposal as to how these matters are addressed; but we demand action be taken immediately to ensure the safety and security of all."

Nevertheless, the garage continued to shelter homeless persons. We began to visit at night. I went a couple of times this winter along with a few students in my homelessness class, passing out clothes and blankets. We saw between fifteen and thirty people spending the night. A number were people who recognized me from the Saturday meal at St. Joe's. A few were women. One young man, who had been talking to himself before I approached, asked "Are you going to kill me for this?" after I offered him a blanket. He gave me a big hug after I assured him that I didn't plot his death.

One night, we found a camping tent, with three teenagers - but wasn't there the next night. Although I had always been appalled by the thought of people sleeping in the garage, I came to appreciate that it had many advantages over sleeping under a bridge, especially in winter.

On January 9th, the Civic Center LDC met, with many of us (including some garage residents) present to give public comments. The LDC voted to hire a security firm to patrol the garage between 5Am and 6:30PM. There was no motion to change the doors. There was also no response to our repeated suggestions that the LDC provide porta-potties. So it appeared that people could continue to sleep there at night as long as they did not disturb garage users. Yet, at a meeting at the County DHS in February, the County chief of security informed us that the LDC would be installing new doors to exclude homeless person, probably sometime in March.

Under the leadership of the House of Mercy, we have been actively seeking a building near downtown that could serve as an emergency shelter. We have found a promising building just outside the Inner Loop, but need to negotiate with the City over zoning.

You can help by contacting city and county legislators and urging that they (1) end plans to close the garage to homeless persons until a suitable shelter is established and (2) work enthusiastically to secure such a shelter. As plans progress, we may also be asking for contributions - both of volunteer work in a new shelter and help to finance it.

Public Stations of the Cross - Good Friday, April 18, 2014

St. Joseph's House, House of Mercy and Rochester Pax Christi will enact once again a public Stations of the Cross in downtown Rochester on Good Friday beginning at 11 AM in front of the Kodak Office on State Street. Our purpose is to publicly repent for the many ways in which Jesus is crucified today – in the cruel treatment of the poor, in America's commitment to growing inequality in the name of 'free enterprise', in our country's continued killing of innocent and "enemy" while the Church whose founder commanded us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us, stand by silently, in complicity.



Please join us. The walk around downtown Rochester, stopping at various locations that symbolize the contemporary Crucifixion, takes about two hours. A sample follows.

FOURTEENTH STATION – JESUS IS BURIED

FEDERAL BUILDING

Leader: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You,

People: Because by your Death and Resurrection You have saved us.

Leader: On April 11, it will be fifty years since Pope John XXIII issued his great encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, in which he stated: "Justice, then, right reason and consideration for human dignity and life urgently demand that the arms race should cease;that nuclear weapons should be banned; and finally that all come to an agreement on a fitting program of disarmament ...". Fifty years later, we have failed to heed the Pope's words. More nations than ever possess nuclear weapons, and new types of weapons, such as the unmanned Predator and Reaper drones, armed with Hellfire Missiles, have become America's high tech method of crucifying our enemies. Drones have been used to execute US citizens, such as Anwar al-Awlaki and his sixteen year old son – without indictment, without trial, without conviction. Drone strikes have occurred in some half dozen countries. Drone strikes outside of Afghanistan have been conducted by CIA civilian operators, a clear violation of International Law. Although the Administration claimed that its drone strikes have not killed innocent civilians, the carnage on the ground have proved them wrong.

LET US PRAY.

How Did it Happen? *(continued from p. 1)*

to export Jews out of the country. An Inquisition gone mad.

And what about fear and intimidation, driven into the consciousness of the people? So that, it soon became "too late": Loss of job, threats to family, exile, loss of life – they all work to a large extent. Here is a deep bow to the heroes we know so little about, the Schindlers who risked everything to hide and transport Jews to safety.

And to the second question, here are some thoughts:

How difficult it has been here in the U.S. to raise a cry against targeted assassinations. The fall of the Twin Towers, the subsequent Homeland Security Act, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the hundreds of billions wasted to occupy Afghanistan. Every step a huge step in squashing public opposition to reaper drones. Drones that reportedly kill about 2% of their "targets," 98% innocent men, women, and children. Drones that hone in on cell phones and can't distinguish a child from a dog. Drone operators "following instructions" to follow up a drone attack with another attack, targeting the rescue people – who "must be" the enemy.

Nonviolent civilian resistance to the drones here in the upstate New York region continues. Ask Harry Murray why he protested the drones at Hancock, was arrested, and found guilty. Ask why he returned to Hancock and was arrested

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A Hello..... from Stergios

I first learned about St. Joe's when I was parking my car on South Ave. before walking to work downtown. I was intrigued by the flyer in the window regarding "Bread for All" and inquired how to volunteer. Once I started, I saw and felt the community and camaraderie at St Joe's. I wanted to learn more about the Catholic Worker movement and their philosophy.

Having Jose as a friend and informational anchor, I thought that my life might be enriched in communal living and serving the marginalized Rochester population in a direct and experiential way. I also thought that it would enrich my graduate work in the areas of theological and social work studies at an area college.

It has been almost a year at St. Joe's. I am feeling blessed to be part of the overall community both within and without. Although the place can be chaotic and confusing at times, the overall experience and feeling is one of thankfulness and gratitude. Working at the Bread for All bakery that is part of St Joe's, I have seen individuals who have graduated from the training program become more confident and active in the Rochester community.

The possibility of working one-to one with Dorothy Day House residents is a near term objective. Being exposed to diversity, poverty, pain and also joy and compassion are gifts that are freely given that I honor and respect.

I am from southern Europe (Greece specifically). At 23 while traveling in Japan, I met my wife to be. She was an American and I followed her to Rochester. It was very trying not knowing the language. I struggled to adjust for several years and thought of returning home. The birth of my daughter in 1990 served as a commitment to stay here till she was an adult. Soon I was able to adjust and become comfortable in living here. I am presently doing graduate work in Religion

I am glad to be part of this giving and wonderful community and look forward to sharing more of myself to the street people that we call guests and serve seven days each week.

How Did it Happen? *(continued from p. 3)*

again – and again a third time – in the spirit of nonviolent resistance to the reaper drones.

Will you raise your voice, just a little? Will you act – act, as Dan Berrigan suggests, "as if the truth were true"? Accumulated silence builds up like a blanket of despair, covering the illegal and immoral deaths, done in our name, done with our complicity.

"This has got to stop," said the judge when he recently sentenced 12 good citizens to fifteen days in the county slammer for protesting at Hancock.

We couldn't agree with him more. Our "this" is not the protesting he so wants to shut down. Our "this" is the targeting of people by reaper drones, those on the current "kill" list.

For a violation such as disorderly conduct, the maximum sentence is 15 days. With "good time," one serves 2/3 of that sentence (10 days). Because Onondaga County correctional facility does not discharge sentenced inmates on Saturdays and Sundays, those who recently served went in on a Friday, the day of sentencing, and were released 8 days later, the following Friday (to hold people until Monday is against their policy; so 8 days are served). Days Dorothy Day called a "mini-retreat." Serving with the poor for nonviolent actions on behalf of the poor.

Many opportunities exist to protest the drones alongside those actions that may lead to an arrestmany opportunities to pierce the silence, to raise one's voice with others.....a loud call for justice.



Stergios Skatharoudis



"Drone operators flying an MQ-9 Reaper training mission from a control station at Holloman Air Force Base, N. M., last year."

St. Romero's Update - Rev. Chava Redonnet

In mid-January, while one of our parishioners was in the detention center awaiting deportation, his housemate was picked up in a traffic stop in Spencerport. Six women worked together to set him free; four put up bond, one helped with communication, and I delivered the bond. He was reunited with his wife and 3-year-old son after an intense week of worry. Seeing his son in his arms, content and happy, was worth the whole week!

This week he enrolled in "Alternatives to Detention," as so many of our parishioners have done before. On Tuesday morning I picked him up and we drove to Buffalo. Along the way we talked – first, about our friend who was deported. I explained the dangers if he were to come back. Being in this country without documents is a violation – like a traffic violation. That's why detainees wear blue in the detention center, to differentiate them from criminals, in orange, and violent criminals, in red. But once you've been deported, returning without permission is a felony. A lot of people think it's a crime the first time and I think it's important to realize it isn't.

Then we talked about what would happen in Alternatives to Detention: the bi-weekly trips to Buffalo, the phone calls, the house visits. He has a phone in his house, so won't need to wear "la braceleta," the gps ankle bracelet that must be charged for 3 hours each day. We talked about what would happen in court, how usually people are given time to get a lawyer, and that the process can go on for several years; but that ultimately, he's not likely to be able to stay unless there is a change in the immigration laws. He slowly grew quiet as the truth sank in. I know that moment. I've experienced it, talking to Santiago's lawyer. It's the moment when you realize the deck is totally stacked against you. We went on to Buffalo, reported in to his detention officer, then walked the several blocks to enroll over at ISAP (Intensive Supervision Appearance Program). In spring or summer it's a pleasant enough walk, but his was February, with a cold wind blowing off Lake Erie. He was not dressed for the weather. I offered him one of my layers, but he laughed, and chose to tough it out.

Sometimes, walking with people in this process, I worry that I'm helping them to cooperate in their own oppression. But I do believe that by doing this I'm not only helping people navigate a confusing and impatient system that makes few allowances for language barriers, functional illiteracy or lack of technological sophistication, which lots of folks have in one degree or another – but also giving the message, you are not alone. You matter.

So what is our response, as church, as Christians, as human beings, to a world in which the deck is so utterly stacked against our brothers and sisters, born into poverty, leaving home because there's no way to make a living there, making the dangerous trip here across the desert, living and working without protection, ending up in a system that recognizes almost no rights or needs, that tells them they are not people? I remember the day 2 ½ years ago that I gave one of the men a brochure from the ACLU called "Conosce sus derechos," (Know Your Rights) and he looked at me with such a depth of hopelessness and said, "Ilegales no tienen derechos." Illegals don't have rights. It was the first time I'd heard anyone refer to themselves as "an illegal," and I felt punched in the stomach. How do we together climb out of that hole?

My own (limited) experience of oppression says, you have to have hope, and a vision. You have to have people who look at you and see more than the beaten, useless lump you feel like and catch from them a belief in yourself as whole and capable. It may be possible to do it alone, I don't know – but in my experience when you're focused on the mud you're in, you might need someone to point out the single star in the sky, the sliver of light on the horizon, and catch a

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House Comings and Goings:

We have had a number of personnel changes since last December. Not the least of which was our Chinese friend, **Yue Qi**, who opted to return home to Beijing, China. Yue had lived in our transitional housing for the past three years. He came to the U of R in the late 90's to study physics. He switched majors when he saw the lean market for Physics majors and went to RIT to major in Information Technology. He was very computer literate keeping our House computers operational and did the layout for this newsletter. The uncertainty of our immigration debate was a strong factor in his decision.



Yue Qi's farewell dinner, with Jim, Dave, & Ron



Jim & Mike

Mike who spent close to year as a Worker left in December to move closer to his family in Minnesota. He will be missed for his excellent minute-takings of our meetings along with his outstanding people skills. **Jim** who is in his second visit to our community (the first was 3 years ago) has decided to extend his present commitment. He has helped us in many areas with his quiet manner.

Bobby our kitchen coordinator and cook moved

back last November to California to be nearer his family. He tells us he is now with the L A Catholic Worker. **Dave** has been with St Joe's for the past year; first as shelter guest, then to our transitional housing and now doing kitchen meal prep and helping with our emergency shelter.....and now our newest board member. **Dan** hails from the Albany area after visiting our web site and getting a better idea of what we are about. Lastly, **Bob** signed on starting last month after working with Peter & Paul's soup kitchen for many years.....a Rochester native, he just completed our four week orientation.



Dave & Bob

A lecture "Hellfire from Heaven: the Morality of Weaponized Drones" by our **Harry Murray** was delivered last month at the first Fr. Joseph A. Trovato lecture at John Fisher College. Fr. Trovato came to Fisher in 1959 and was the founder of what is now known as Campus Ministry.

The **sock project** that we started in last newsletter issue has received more than enough funds to get us thru 2014. Our guests constantly ask/need socks. Thank you. Our **Free Store** (take what you need share what you have) at 125 Caroline St. had its phone listed incorrectly in the last issue. The correct one: 353-9882. Call Jasmin to learn when you can drop off donated items in workable shape. **Tom** lectured at a Nazareth College last month to a social studies class on the Catholic Worker movement with St Joe's as a local example.

The end of last month St Joe's had a sing-along of Pete Seeger's songs put together by Peg..... a good tribute and good fun to a great man. Recently, a group of U of R Med students along with their attending doctor spent three evening hours examining our Dorothy Day House residents and the 15 folks in our emergency shelter. It was so successful that we plan to do another time. One man had sky-high blood pressure and was sent to Highland Hospital emergency. Another recent visit that proved popular with our guests was a nutritionist who discussed the bad things that come from too much sugar and salt.

New Box Ramp for St. Joe's Basement

We bought a large-capacity dryer last year to handle the large quantity of bedding and blankets that our emergency shelter produces each day. It is located in our basement alongside our high capacity washer. Installing it was not easy for our maintenance crew had to remove the existing delivery ramp to fit in.

Kevin Gebo and Joe Baldwin, engineering students from RIT, spent part of their weekend, recently, constructing a box delivery ramp for the basement of St. Joe's. They used their design skills, carpentry know-how and great dedication to get the job done. In the morning, they brought their tool boxes and power tools, and with a flurry of electric saws buzzing and pounding hammers throughout the day, the ramp was completed by early evening. Fellow students, Courtney Smith and Pieter Werner, also helped for a few hours. Kevin even slid down the ramp to make sure it would hold!

The RIT students are part of a group called Engineers for a Sustainable World. Kevin is a graduate student and will complete his engineering studies in May. He has also spent time working in Haiti with the nonprofit SOIL and Sarah Brownell, one of its founders. Sarah, a former full-time Catholic Worker at St. Joe's, now teaches engineering at RIT.

Joe is a senior mechanical engineering student and has plans to work overseas in Nigeria on a water development project through Engineers Without Borders.

The community at St. Joe's is very grateful and appreciative of the hard work and generous hearts and spirit of these two young men.

BEFORE:



AFTER:



St. Romero's Update *(continued from p. 5)*

reflection of your whole and capable self shining in their eyes.

So that's our role, I think. Being bearers of the simple message, "you matter." You matter. Your life matters, your well-being matters. Your children matter. Your diabetes, your drinking problem, your awful living conditions, your needs and hopes and dreams, they all matter.

You and I can't fix the system. We can (and should) raise a ruckus about injustice and use our voices and our power as citizens to work for change, but we can't force change. What we can do, is love.

Since September 2011, thirteen people in our little church have been picked up by immigration. Three of them have been deported. Five are in the "Alternatives to Detention Program," and three more have graduated from that. They no longer report to Buffalo bi-weekly, but get a monthly phone call. Two more never asked for my help. All those still here are awaiting court dates; and all of them need your prayers.

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality Rochester Catholic Worker Community

Some of us live in houses; some of us live on the street; some of us have a room of our own, or a bed and a place to keep; some of us have a cot or piece of a couch or patch of floor to return to each night; some hold special positions of power and roles with specific responsibilities, some do whatever they can. Our aim is to try each day to "build a new society in the shell of the old" as we practice the various works of mercy and labor with whatever resources, physical as well as spiritual, that we have been given at the time.

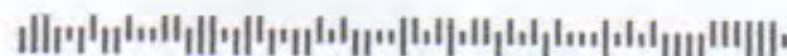
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House Needs:

Prayers
Butter
Laundry Soap Powder
Men's Underwear (32-44)

Sugar
Boots/Sneakers
Jeans
Jelly/Jam

BLEACH
Toilet Paper
Coffee/Mugs
Single Sheets

Hoodies
39-gal. Trash Bags
Razors
BATH TOWELS

Athletic Socks
Pillows
Large Jackets
Gloves/Hats

CALENDAR

March 30 Foot & Hair Clinic
April 13 Shelter closes
April 14 Closed for Cleaning
April 18 Good Friday
Way of the Cross
April 20 Easter
April 23 Bike repair Clinic Opens
May 26 Memorial Day Picnic

CELEBRANTS:

3-5-14 Rev. Matthew Leah Nivkoloff
3-11-14 Fr. Jim Callan
3-18-14 Sr. Grace Miller
3-25-14 Mike Bouche
4-1-14 Deacon Bill Coffey
4-8-14 Sergios Skatharoudis - Sufi
4-15-14 Rev. Chava Redonnet
4-22-14 Rev. Lawrence Hargrave
4-29-14 Rev. Matthew Leah Nivkoloff
5-6-14 Stegios Skatharoudis- Sufi
5-13-14 Cathy Mrzywka
5-20-14 Sr. Grace Miller
5-27-14 Rev. Matthew Leah Nivkoloff
6-3-14 Rev. Matt Smeltzer
6-10-14 Fr. Bob Worth
6-17-14 Rev. Chava Redonnet
6-24-14 Charlotte Barnard