

The Hartford Catholic Worker

St. Martin De Porres House
St. Brigid House



The poor tell us who we are.

-Philip Berrigan

For Dorothy Day—The Water Strider



Jacqueline Allen-Donçot

<i>To whom would they go</i>	<i>them to do unto you"</i>	<i>nor prisons nor hospitals</i>
<i>she wondered then questioned herself</i>	<i>a voice whispered and she responded with hospitality</i>	<i>the absurd Christs who slip through every mental grid and rational sieve</i>
<i>and yet she would not</i>	<i>with soup and benches</i>	<i>those to whom no law or structure can apply</i>
<i>condemn pope bishop not priest</i>	<i>and bags of clothing</i>	<i>the Christs walking on water</i>
<i>for they also are the Christ though they do not carry</i>	<i>yes—clothing and feeding and housing</i>	<i>instead of using boats or bridges</i>
<i>shopping bags nor sleep on park benches—</i>	<i>the homeless the rejected the unwanted</i>	<i>the Christs reaching their purpose to live to love</i>
<i>"Do what you would wish</i>	<i>the absurd Christs who fit not in churches</i>	<i>and embracing it</i>

[J. Janda](#)

Lent and Easter 2024

The Hartford Catholic Worker

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The Hartford Catholic Worker is published quarterly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are a 501c3 tax exempt organization. We do not seek or accept state or federal funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, purplehousecw@gmail.com and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Baby Beth Donovan, Anthony Harris, Joshua Collazo, Jacqueline, Ammon, and Christopher Allen-Douçot.

Our Board of directors include: Justin Evanovich, Danielle DeRosa, Sr. Pat McKeon, Rex Fowler, Marybeth Albrycht, Isaiah Jacobs, and James Conway.

We Depend On Your Support!

- ♥ Gifts of time, talent, and treasure help us perform the Works of Mercy. **Donations can be mailed to: HCW 26 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120.** Donations can also be made online by clicking on the "Donate" button at our website: <https://www.hartfordcatholicworker.org/>

Thank-you!

Good Friday 2024

Please join us at the gates of the U.S. Submarine Base in Groton as we pray a nonviolent Stations of the Cross. We will meet at 10:30 AM on Friday, March 29th at the intersection of Rte 12 and Crystal Lake Rd.

More Mail!?

Dear Hartford Catholic Worker,

It's always a great day when your newsletter appears in my mail box. Granted I love to read but your newsletter is a special treat. I love the art (beautiful Palestinian Madonna by Dwight in the Advent/Christmas issue), the thoughtful and provocative articles by Chris, always with links if you want to take a deeper dive, the House Notes that remind us of the nonstop building of the Beloved Community that happens every day on Clark Street. I get a loooooooot of Catholic Worker newsletters and yours is definitely among the best.

Fr. Terry Moran

Cirque du Soleil BAZZAR

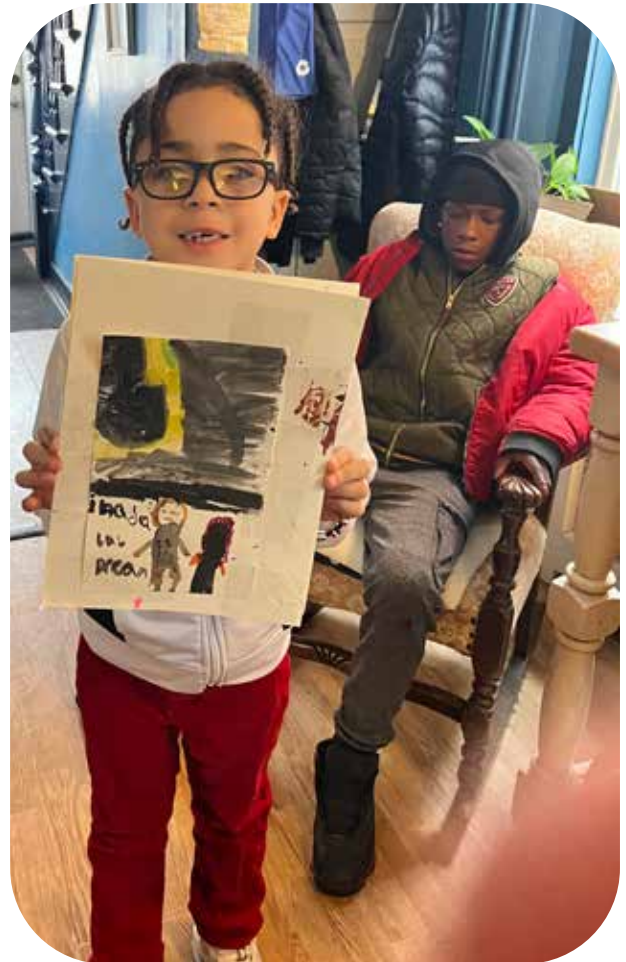
Under the Big Top, On Market Street Hartford

April 6 – May 5

Cirque du Soleil BAZZAR is an eclectic lab of endless invention where a joyous troupe of acrobats, dancers, and musicians create an awe-inspiring display. They work together to create a quirky one-of-a-kind world under the direction of their maestro. The dynamic company reimagines, rebuilds, and reinvents vibrant scenarios in a setting where the unpredictable is anticipated in an artistic, athletic game of order and disorder. Come and take up residence in this marketplace of enthusiasm and artistic fellowship. You never know, the story's conclusion might only be the beginning!

Special Offer for Hartford Catholic Worker Family/Friends: Use this [link](#) to save up to 20%. Groups of 10+, save 25%, reduced handling fees and access to on-site accommodations such as private event space and meet and greet opportunities with the cast of the show, contact Sarah.Hudson@cirquedusoleil.com for details.

Thank-You Cirque du Soleil for the free tix!!!!



***Jeremy had a bad dream... meanwhile
Shawn is dreaming away***

The Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker: ³ A Decentralized Society

Each year the *New York Catholic Worker* publishes [The Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker](#) in the original Catholic Worker newspaper put out by our “mother house”. We have been reviewing these aims and means as a community and with our board. Over the next several issues we will be reprinting portions of the aims and means with commentary on what they mean to us and how we are attempting to be true to the charism of the Catholic Worker.

“In morals, relations between people are corrupted by distorted images of the human person. Class, race and gender often determine personal worth and position within society, leading to structures that foster oppression. Capitalism further divides society by pitting owners against workers in perpetual conflict over wealth and its control. Those who do not “produce” are abandoned, and left, at best, to be “processed” through institutions. Spiritual destitution is rampant, manifested in isolation, madness, promiscuity and violence...

In contrast to what we see around us, as well as within ourselves, stands St. Thomas Aquinas’ doctrine of the Common Good, a vision of a society where the good of each member is bound to the good of the whole in the service of God.

To this end, we advocate:

A decentralized society, in contrast to the present bigness of government, industry, education, health care and agriculture. We encourage efforts such as family farms, rural and urban land trusts, worker ownership and management of small factories, homesteading projects, food, housing and other cooperatives—any effort in which money can once more become merely a medium of exchange, and human beings are no longer commodities.

At the Hartford Catholic Worker our morals are grounded in the innate dignity of all persons and our utter interdependence. Every person ever born has been created in God’s image. Moreover, each of us is a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1Cor. 6:19), that is God continues to reveal Godself to us by choosing to always be incarnate bit by bit in each of us. Every person ever born survived their first day, their first week, year and

more because someone else loved us; someone fed us, bathed us, kept us safe and warm. The American mythos of the rugged individual is a lie- no baby



Sarah Fuller

ever changed its own diaper. We need each other, we always have; without the love of others the human species will cease to be.

As sacred and social beings we believe that the pursuit of shalom, of right relationships with each other, our enemies, strangers, wealth, creation, and indeed God, is the central logic, need, and duty of humanity. Our vision of a decentralized society is one where the pursuit of right relationships transforms the face of the earth as the hungry will be filled, enemies reconciled, and the planet no longer defiled. In a decentralized society: neighbors share, the “benefit of the doubt” is leaned into, knowledge begins with the lived experience but doesn’t end with it, wisdom is the fruit of valuing each other’s lived experience, and compassion to one another is the default response to suffering.

We agree with the [Ignatian presupposition](#): “... it should be presupposed that [everyone] ought to be more eager to put a good

interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.

Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If the meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.”

We are wary of the increasingly centralized nature of our society and its power to corrupt right relationships. Centralized industrial practices have corrupted our relationship with the created world. A faulty exegesis of Genesis 1:26-31 has been displaced the duty of stewardship with the sin of domination. Toward this end mountain tops are blown off for coal, factory fishing boats empty the sea, forests are clear cut, the sky is poisoned, peoples’ have been subject to genocide, and others to enslavement.

With our centralized communication via social media we have reduced each other to caricatures or demons, and ourselves to shiny, faultless demigods. In the process we’re losing the ability to socialize- we are losing our humanity.

Relationships of all sorts are being reduced by the logic of capitalism into transactions. When health care and education became industries we are no longer patients or students. When incarceration and welfare programs are privatized incarcerated and impoverished persons become raw materials. When government is thought to be best when it runs like a business and civic agents see themselves as customers of the state, the common good is sacrificed for profits and the vulnerable are left to suffer. In a centralized society we are only customers who don’t even realize what we’ve lost.

In a decentralized society we are sisters and brothers, mentors and proteges, parents and children, peers and friends. In a decentralized society we are not defined by what we can buy, or how much we can produce, but by the nature and quality of our relationships.Ω

Christopher J. Doucot

Way back in 2005 I wrote about “Greg” and “Juan” ([Will He Fly, Fall 2005 issue](#)). At the time Greg was 19 and Juan was 7. They both were living very difficult lives; and they both had an easy smile and were quick to laugh. They were something I’ve never been- they were “happy go lucky”. Do folks still use this expression?

Regardless, their lives are still difficult... and they’re still happy go lucky- most of the time. Let me catch you up.

Not long after my original essay Juan and his younger brother ended up in foster care. Jackie and I tried to become his foster parents but our criminal records for nonviolent civil disobedience, and the communal living scenario of the Hartford Catholic Worker proved to be too much for DCF to swallow. Juan and his brother spent several years living with three different families. We were able to maintain our relationship with them during this period, picking them up every Saturday for our program.

By the time Juan reached middle school aged a wonderful young woman who had become part of our beloved extended community, Amanda, took him under her wing. She helped with his homework after school. They went on field trips. She brought him home for dinner with her parents on a regular basis. By this point he had become her little brother in every way but blood. Amanda raised sufficient funds to enroll him in a Catholic middle school, and then she raised even more money and he enrolled at Northwest Catholic H.S. When she went away to college her parents’ nest wasn’t empty for long as Juan moved in for the next four years!

Juan held his own academically at Northwest, he had “game” on the varsity basketball team, and with his ever chipper outlook and coy smile he was a social all-star. After high school he married his sweetheart and together they have

2 utterly precocious and energetic sons, aged 2 and 4. Juan was briefly enrolled at CCSU, but things didn’t quite work out; though not for a lack of effort. Juan is nothing if not diligent and motivated. As an adult he’s always been employed. As an adult without a car this is not as easy as those of us who have cars may think. He currently works at a warehouse in Middletown which is



at least a 40-minute bus ride away from the apartment he shares with his mother.

Juan has experienced more than his share, and more than a lifetime’s worth, of grief and he’s not yet 30. A few years back he was living with his wife and mother in a rundown apartment building a block away from us when the abandoned building next door caught fire. By the time he saw the fire it had engulfed his building as well. With flames literally nipping at their heels everyone made it out without injury, but they lost everything they owned except for the clothes on their backs. Juan and his partner moved in with us for

a while to save up for a new place; our generous supporters helped to replace their wardrobe and furniture.

Not long after the fire his family experienced a horrific tragedy. While the sister who basically raised him was driving down a short cross street a block away from the Purple House, their brother in the passenger seat and her three young children in the back, their vehicle was sprayed with gunfire. Juan’s toddler nephew, sitting in between his grade school aged sisters, was the only one struck by the bullets. His sisters, mom, and uncle witnessed his death.

May God have mercy on all of us who have normalized at worst, resigned to at best, the unparalleled gun violence of this nation. *“A cry was heard in [Hartford]— weeping and great mourning. [“Marisol”] weeps for her [child], refusing to be comforted, for they are dead.”* (Matthew 2:18). Of course, God heard Marisol weep; so did her family, but does anyone else hear the relentless round of wailing mothers? If we hear their cries, why are we so unmoved to stop the violence? If we can’t hear them, then maybe we are we too far from them. Do we turn away, turn the page, change the channel to hide from their grief? Are we afraid we won’t know what to say? Perhaps it’s best not to say anything. Perhaps it’s best to just be present.

Through all this heartache Juan has remained grounded, sober to the reality of the hand he’s been dealt, and yet, still joyful and hopeful. On top of his fathering and working Juan has recently enrolled in classes at Hartford Hospital to become an EMT. We are so proud of this kid. We’re blessed to be able to help pay for the classes with money from our Daylon Fund. Daylon was a Green House kid with an easy smile and a great “game” on the basketball court that he parlayed into a spot on a college squad. After Daylon was shot and killed in 2016, we pledged to help Green House kids with scholarships in his memory; in return they send a note or card to Daylon’s

mom. Kids who knew Daylon, like Juan, are also asked to share a memory of Daylon in their notes.

A few weeks back I took Juan and Greg out to dinner at [El Serape](#)- 'hood Mexican food according to Greg, for Juan's birthday. After our dinner we stood on the sidewalk across from "juvie" on Broad St; our breath rising in the cold night air giving the appearance that we were sharing a "bogie" rather than stories. Juan recalled his little brother's too frequent appearances and involuntary stays across the street. Greg, who laughs with gusto, burst out giggling about how he was on a first name basis with the C.O.'s when he was a kid.

Our conversation quickly turned somber when Greg told Juan he witnessed the murder of the teen believed to be the killer of Juan's nephew. The teen was walking down the street Greg's mom lives on when a passing car jerked to a stop. Someone leapt out and shot the kid with a handgun. Greg was in disbelief that the kid didn't fall, soon another gunman began spraying the street with automatic gunfire. The boy fell and did not get up. The other boys drove off. I'm not fully confident in the veracity of Greg's account but it seemed that Juan had heard a similar depiction of events through the neighborhood grapevine. Neither Greg nor Juan were in any way involved in this hit. Greg's take on it was fatalistic; he said it was karma without using the word, which he does not know. Juan was rueful, contemplative in his take. He was somber about the waste of life, of lives, but there was also a hint of resignation in his voice, a foreboding that maybe it was all inevitable; there was also a contrasting figurative whisper that maybe it- none of it, the guns, the poverty, the struggles, the grief would have been preordained if they lived in a different world, even a different part of the world.

So, maybe you're wondering what "Greg" has been up to these last 19



years? Greg is a survivor; against the odds Greg is surviving a society that does its' best to deny him, to hide him, to corral, imprison, isolate, dismiss, and forget about him. In some ways Greg is like a real-life Forest Gump, except that instead of being white, middle class, and intellectually challenged, Greg is Black, impoverished, and intellectually challenged- so instead of always being in the right place at the right time like Forest Gump, Greg always seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I continue to be Greg's representative payee in charge of his SSI disability benefits. These past several months his monthly check has been \$450. His rent without utilities is \$550. He is receiving this diminished amount, instead of the \$943 received by another disabled person for whom I'm also a rep. payee, because he found part time work washing dishes at a Denny's during the pandemic. Unfortunately, he is literally incapable of managing money and I did not have any authority to manage his paycheck. Subsequently, he was very popular on payday with folks who knew this, and he fell further behind on his rent and utilities. He hasn't washed dishes in months, but Social Security insists he was overpaid and so his monthly check remains even more

insufficient than it would normally be.

Greg knows right from wrong, but his moral compass is oriented a bit differently than most other folks. He reasons, rightly in my mind, that it is not his fault that he was born poor in a society that hides the poor, Black in a society that penalizes nonwhite members, and intellectually diminished in a society that dismisses such folks as useless and thus worthless. And so, he believes stealing from folks who were born with opportunities that he will never have, is justified in order to make ends meet and to rectify some of the unfairness in his life.

He's always asking to accompany me when I run errands. At times things go smoothly like when I take him grocery shopping and at the checkout, he'll ask the clerk if the store is hiring. Other times things go harmlessly sideways, like when I stopped by to see a professor colleague from the University of Hartford, and Greg asked my buddy if he would break a comically counterfeit \$20. And once things went pretty bad. He joined me on a trip to the UCONN Law School, while I was meeting with a lawyer, he was busy swiping \$10 from a secretary's purse. We were both detained by UCONN police, he was strip searched. He is still proud that the money was never found. I no longer take him anywhere but the grocery store or to a burger joint.

When I wrote about Greg back in 2005, he had been put on probation for some petty nonviolent crime. He is still on probation. He has been under some level of Department of Corrections custody since grade school. He is currently on the run from the police; the warrant for his arrest is because he skipped a court date. He skipped the court date because he forgot about a probation date. The courts, jails, and prisons of our land are full of folks like Greg who will effectively serve life sen-

(Please see: 20 years, p6)

20 years, cont.

tences because of missed administrative hearings or unpaid fines. Greg may have sticky fingers, but he is not a threat to public safety. Greg's situation is shared by hundreds of thousands of others in our land. "Non-criminal 'technical' violations of probation and parole — like missing a curfew or testing positive for alcohol or other drug use — are known drivers of incarceration in Connecticut, putting hundreds and hundreds of people in cages every year. Incarceration of even a few days, let alone weeks, is catastrophic — people can lose their jobs, housing, custody of their children, and more. Due to systemic racism, people of color are disproportionately on probation and parole." (to learn more on this issue see this [report by KATAL](#)) Like hundreds of thousands of other impoverished Black men, Greg has been reduced to a raw material, mined like coal to provide a living for a myriad of professions that compose the prison industry.

Eventually the police will get wise and cover the second-floor window to his apartment and not just the front and back doors. Until then, Greg remains "free", I guess, though if you think his life of insufficient food, inadequate housing, diminished mental capacity, and social banishment is genuine freedom, ask yourself how free you would feel if you traded places with him.

Greg has also become a father. He and the mother only briefly had custody before the state placed the child with relatives. Greg is heartbroken over this. I've tried to help facilitate visits, but the DCF has not been cooperative. I think Greg is aware that despite his love for this child he is not capable of caring for it- at least not without the level of social support that is unimaginable in our society. He asked me once "Dad, why am I like this? Why can't I help myself? Why can't I have what Ammon and Micah (my sons) have?" Am I

wrong to think that a silver lining of losing his child is that despite being born poor and Black like Greg, he might have a sliver of a chance of a better life



than Greg? He asked me years ago why we didn't take him in when he was little like we took in Juan. I'm not sure we could have helped him overcome the riptide of a society that constantly threatens him with drowning, but now as he barely treads water, I wish we had done more.

In my 2005 essay I pondered their fates and feared that Greg's difficult life would prove to be a preview of what awaited Juan. My thinking was simplistic, and my fears have not been realized. Their journeys continue to be difficult ones, shaped by forces beyond their control which limit their choices. Some of us ignore these forces, more of us deny their existence. Ignorance and denial only make them more potent.

Greg and Juan possess a certain *je ne sais quoi*- for Greg this is despite his sometimes-antisocial proclivities. They have indomitable spirits. They have easy smiles, are quick to laugh, and fun to be with. In a just and compassionate society

Juan would have more time with his kids because he wouldn't need to work double shifts or waste hours commuting by our inadequate, underfunded system of public transportation. In such a society Greg would have decent housing with adequate psychosocial support that nurtured his good humor and compassion. Yes, despite his stealing Greg is a caring soul! In a just land Greg would have a relationship with his child, he would have a job, and he would be a cherished, welcomed member of society. Greg need not be on the lam to be free; Juan ought not be required to work nearly every waking moment to flourish.

We [spent \\$11,500/second for twenty years](#) fighting the War on Terror. We developed nuclear weapons in just three years by assembling the smartest scientists in the world. We put men on the moon with the help [of former Nazi rocket scientists](#). When it comes to rockets, wars, and weapons we'll work with anyone and keep the printing presses at the US Mint running 24/7. Why not invest \$11,000/second fighting a War on Poverty? We had a Manhattan Project, why not a Beloved Community Project? We welcomed Nazis! And we can't welcome people who are impoverished? Or Black? Or mentally challenged?! Really?! I don't buy it.

The American "can do" confidence mystifies our European friends, but I believe in it. Feeding, housing, and welcoming people- *loving people*- is cheaper than war and easier than space travel. But it's hard to love people we don't know and it's impossible to comfort grief from a distance. Maybe the first step to a "*new society within the shell of the old*" any of us can take is to break bread with folks like Greg and Juan. A banquet awaits those who dare to love their neighbors- strangers and enemies included- as they love themselves and with more than words.Ω

So what do Palestinians in Gaza really think about Hamas?

Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib

December 20, 2023

As the brutal war between Israel and Gaza grinds on, an increasing number of the coastal enclave's residents are openly and publicly condemning Hamas' actions and blaming the group for their misery.

While most Gazans are angry with Israel and the sheer level of death and destruction caused by its ferocious military campaign and the often seemingly indiscriminate targeting of civilian homes and infrastructure, many are furious with the Islamist group that has ruled the Strip since 2007. Hamas's rise to power resulted in a choking blockade imposed on the territory by Israel and Egypt, worsening the living conditions and prospects for the 2.3 million inhabitants.

More destructively, Hamas engaged in several futile and utterly useless armed conflicts against Israel and turned Gaza into a citadel from which it dragged its people along a "resistance" project, resulting in deadly wars with tens of thousands of casualties and lasting scars and traumas.

The horrors being experienced by Gazans now are so horrendously unprecedented that some are quietly

and secretly hoping Israel will destroy Hamas out of desperation for an alternative. Dozens of social media videos and posts, random outbursts captured by journalists, and spontaneously expressed opinions by angry Gazans document the increasingly common sentiment inside Gaza.

"You son of a dog... release the [Israeli] hostages for god's sake (to stop the war)," yells a bereaved Gazan on a radio show. A 23-year-old young mother decries her misery and hardships, asking for 'Godly vengeance' on those "who caused all of this destruction," in a veiled reference to Hamas... An elderly Gaza woman bravely tells

In video after video, we see Gazans blame Hamas for their misery, publicly decry its actions, and accuse its fighters of operating among civilians and contributing to their deaths.

...I grew up in the Strip and have most of my family members living there. The overall mood among the population in Gaza is characterized by exhaustion and an unprecedented desire for a fundamentally different future. Gazans recall this Arabic proverb to outsiders who cheer on Hamas as a beneficial "resistance" group: 'Whoever's hand is in water is unlike those whose hand is in fire.' Pales-

tinians in the Strip want a life without Hamas and its violence, narrow ideology, and cultish glorification of death or "martyrdom."

Ironically, Hamas' propaganda has succeeded in deceiving and gaining sympathy among Arab audiences, Palestinians in the West Bank..., and some Western activists... Many are reluctant to critique and condemn Hamas, viewing the group as a natural expression of "resistance" against a persistent occupation and injustice. In reality, however, Hamas [has] narrow and specific political goals..., which are not representative of the diverse elements of Palestinians' aspirations for freedom and self-determination.

Many outside of Gaza find the above examples of civilians living inside the Strip condemning Hamas uncomfortable and inconvenient for their narratives, which tend to focus exclusively on Israel's role in the

(Please see: *Hamas*, p8)



Rafah: The penultimate step in Israel's march of genocide.

Jewish Voice for Peace

On February 11, while 100 million Americans were watching [a football game], Israel unleash[ed] the next stage in its genocide of Palestinians. Air strikes over Rafah killed at least 67 Palestinians...

Rafah... is the last refuge for nearly 1.5 million Palestinians displaced by the ongoing Israeli genocide.

Since Israeli bombs began decimating Northern Gaza in October, Palestinians have been told to evacuate to the south. Rafah is as far south as anyone can go. With a ground invasion imminent, the Israeli government is calling for the population to "evacuate" — even though they have nowhere to evacuate to...

After indiscriminately flattening Gaza and pushing Palestinians

towards famine, now the Israeli military is seeking to remove the Palestinians from Gaza permanently, whether by displacement, disease, hunger, or execution. This is the next stage of genocide...

The Israeli military has forcibly dis-



placed the majority of [Gazans] forcing them from one "safe zone" to the next with airstrikes and military assaults at their heels.

Anywhere can be a target: Israel's flattening of hospitals, bakeries, schools, churches, mosques, universities, and countless homes is a crucial part of its genocidal strategy, killing Palestinians not only through bombing but by destroying the conditions for human life. CNN journalists taken on a tour by the Israeli army themselves described the scene in Khan Younis... as "devastation ... beyond imagination."

This systematic annihilation of critical infrastructure has rendered much of Gaza "uninhabitable," according to the UN. Palestinians who remain in the north are facing a total crisis: no humanitarian aid

(Please see: *Peace*, p9)

Larry Kessler's legacy

By Yvonne Abraham, *Globe Columnist*
(Reprinted from the *Boston Globe*)

During the early days of the AIDS epidemic, fear ruled in Boston, and everywhere. It seemed like legions, most of them gay men, were falling to a ruthless illness without a cure, or even a treatment.

Far too many of them suffered alone, shunned by their families and employers as they grew sicker. Even some health workers refused to go near them, leaving food outside their hospital rooms as they battled the illness.

Larry Kessler sent flowers to as many as he could. He was the founding director of [AIDS Action](#), which advocated for and provided services to those with HIV and AIDS, building the activism and spirit of community that helped bring LGBTQ people out of the shadows, and then made them an unstoppable force demanding the same rights as everybody else.

In the mid-1980s, though, the new organization was stretched thin, its funds falling far short of the community's needs. Deputy director Cheryl Schaffer worried about the cost. Why did Kessler insist on sending flowers to everybody? *"He very patiently said, 'The nurses won't go into the rooms and the families aren't there,'"* Schaffer recalled. *"We send flowers to everybody so they know somebody cares about them, and so that the people in the hospital know somebody cares about them. He had that kind of genius."*

Kessler, who devoted his big, loving life to championing the rights and dignity of the unluckiest among us, died February 1, at 81. With his pass-

ing, we have lost a fearless pioneer — a crusader against war, poverty, intolerance, and ignorance. Kessler stood with those battling HIV and AIDS when too few others would, and bore



witness when they lost the war.

"People were dying left and right," Schaffer recalled, of that first dark decade of the epidemic. *"We just kept on, with Larry exemplifying how to do that."* That meant giving those living with the disease a place to gather and help each other, and honoring those who died with proper funerals. It meant pushing legislators and other officials to meet the crisis, and spreading life-saving information on safe sex and drug-use practices that was so bereft of euphemism that it shocked conservatives and others. The MBTA refused to carry AIDS Action ads advocating condom use until a judge ordered it to do so. It also meant applying his sense of play and his humor, even — or especially — when things were grim. Like the time he threw a party for thousands of clients and volunteers at AIDS Action, and insisted on hosting in an Easter Bunny costume. No one is going to

like this, Schaffer thought. They were delighted, as Kessler knew they would be. He was almost always right.

Kessler was powerful enough to move policy and transform thousands of lives, but he never acted like it, and abhorred attention. His husband, Dana Ellsmore, said he was usually mortified when people recognized him in public.

"Larry hated the spotlight," Ellsmore said. *"I don't know if he ever grasped the gravity and scope of the impact he had in this world."*

Raised Catholic, and devoted to the social justice movement led by Dorothy Day, Kessler, who was born in Pittsburgh, was an anti-poverty worker there and threw himself into efforts to end the war in Vietnam. In 1972, he met the writer James Carroll — then a priest in Boston — in a DC lockup after they were both arrested with a group protesting the war in the Capitol rotunda. Carroll convinced Kessler to come to Boston in 1973 to run the Walk for Hunger, which Kessler eventually grew into anti-hunger juggernaut Project Bread.

Kessler had briefly considered becoming a priest himself, but *"he did not need the permission of the church to embrace his vocation,"* Carroll said. *"He embraced it because he saw people in need and tried to help them."*

He finally retired for good in 2015. He threw himself into the garden at the couple's Hyde Park home, tending to his beloved tulips and daffodils.

The garden bent to Kessler's nurturing, his joy, and his will, just as the world did. Ω

Hamas, cont.

unfolding disaster and bloodshed while absolving Palestinian political factions and leaders from any responsibility for their people's misery. It also shouldn't be that difficult to condemn the group's brutal killing and kidnapping of Israeli women, children, and innocent civilians who were sleeping in their homes.

Since the horrendous Oct. 7 attacks and the ensuing brutal Israeli counteroffensive, many who consider themselves "pro-Palestinian" have displayed a stubborn refusal to acknowledge how disastrous Hamas has been for the people of Gaza. They view calls for the condemnation of Hamas as inherently presumptuous or dismissive of Palestinian suffering..., pro-Palestine allies should instinctively criticize the group for its destructive impact on Gazans' lives and

prospects, even before Oct. 7.

The Palestinian people... deserve better representation..., not an exclusionary death cult that has spent the past 30 years sabotaging an imperfect... peace process...

Normalizing the condemnation of Hamas is a moral, political, and strategic imperative to advance the just and urgent pursuit of Palestinian rights, freedom, and self-determination.

(Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib is an American writer who grew up in the Gaza Strip) Ω

Peace, cont.

is able to reach them. More than a month ago, the World Food Programme warned that 93% of displaced Palestinian households lack adequate food.

Now, the entire population is at risk of starvation, with many actively in famine, and the spread of disease is rampant. Families in Gaza are now running out of even the animal and bird feed that they were forced to bake into bread. Many are forced to consume inedible things, like dirt, and clean water is incredibly scarce...

Meanwhile, [Israeli soldiers burn and destroy food warehouses](#) in Gaza City — and proudly post videos to social media of themselves doing so...

The combination of relentless bombardment and unlivable conditions of hunger and disease have driven around 1.5 million Palestinians south to Rafah. Throughout the Israeli military's four-month onslaught, it has categorized Rafah as a "safe zone" from the bombing, ordering Palestinians to evacuate there — turning Rafah into the most densely populated place on earth.

Aid workers are struggling to supply even basic medicine and halt the spread of disease, facing "unprecedented" density in the makeshift camps. UNRWA, the major aid agency in Palestine, has made

it clear that they do not have enough supplies to support even the basic needs of life for the Palestinians sheltering in Rafah.

"No one laughs, no one smiles," described a student in Rafah. *"It's all darkness and pain."*

This is who Israel is at war with: people who are sick, cold, hungry, displaced from their homes, and grieving murdered family members. Forced into camps at the border, people in Rafah must spend most of their days searching for food, fuel, and basic supplies...

Pinned up against the Egyptian border, Palestinians in Rafah are a captive population. Speaking about the Israeli government's plans to invade Rafah, the UN Special Rapporteur in Palestine stated starkly: *"The risk of a massacre of unprecedented scale looms on the horizon."*

First, Israel destroyed the north of Gaza, concentrating people in Rafah. Then, it engineered a humanitarian crisis, destroying medical infrastructure, food supplies, refusing to allow aid to enter, and pushing the U.S. to cut funding to UNRWA. Now, the Israeli military plans to invade and decimate the refugee camp of its own creation. This is nothing short of a policy of extermination.

The Palestinian population in

Rafah is essentially defenseless. "The 9 unprecedented density of Rafah's population makes it nearly impossible to protect civilians in the event of ground attacks," a UN spokesperson said...

The Egyptian government absolutely refuses to allow the Palestinians in Rafah to enter... Trapping Palestinians between a militarized border and its genocidal army, what the Israeli government is calling an "invasion" would look more like a mass displacement — or a mass execution... the U.S. government is still... refusing to stop supporting this accelerating genocide.

From the very beginning of the Israeli onslaught against the people of Gaza, a ceasefire has been desperately needed to save lives. More than a third of a year into this unspeakable brutality, this may be the most dire hour of all. The hands of the U.S. government are soaked in blood. We need an immediate and permanent ceasefire now.Ω



Notes, cont.

the norms and rules of civilization to cherish the sacred lives of all children and keep them safe from harm. For us here in Hartford this means that we have to begin to take responsibility and engage in the personalist work of caring about our community and the earth we stand on

At the Worker, we try to perform the Works of Mercy to take responsibility for the hungry and homeless. With your help, we try to provide food for folks in the neighborhood. We offer kids who have no stable parents a place to live. We provide community and family in a neighborhood filled with toxic empty schools filled with PCBs. We provide outdoor safe space in a neighborhood where developers came to "fix" housing for grandparents and then saw a way to make more cash and stole parklands that have never been replaced. Our food pantry needs are way up. When I get weepy, I think of the outpouring of gifts,

donations, and people power here and I weep tears of joy.

We finally got the work on the floors and kitchen at the Green House going! It is so much easier to cook for the huge group of volunteers and children on Saturday with a new oven and 4 working burners!! The dishwasher is great too (but you needed a master's degree to figure out how to run it at first). We are now accepting dates with folks who would like to help cook a meal on Saturday! We will buy the food and provide helpers!

It is hard to think of Spring with inches of snow on the ground, but we are looking forward to some great plans. I will be making a retreat with our older gals in April. We are working on another weekend of resistance and education on the dangers of first-strike nuclear weapons. A wonderful young couple has been meeting with us about living in the community. Earth Day events are in the making. Before you know it we will be asking for donations of hams and food baskets

for Easter for our families. We will pray the nonviolent Stations of the Cross at the Sub base in Groton on Good Friday, March 29th. This year's Stations will be prepared by our chaplain Fr Terrence Moran. Meet us at 10:30 A.M. at the corner of Rte. 12 and Crystal Lake Rd in Groton.

We are getting a sense that folks prefer our liturgy to be by Zoom rather than in person now. At this point we have been trying both alternating celebrating in person with celebrating over Zoom, but if we get more input in the next few weeks we may adjust accordingly! Let us know if you can help out with Easter hams or flowers and bulbs for Earth Day. Here is a favorite scripture quote of mine for today;

"For lo, the winter is past, the rain has is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth: the time of singing has come,"

As spring arrives let us have faith that God still has faith in, and let us live lives worthy of that Faith.Ω

Notes From De Porres House



Valentina's Valentine

Jacqueline Allen

Hello dear friends I've been very weepy of late. Part of it could be that my face looks like a burnt pizza. I just endured a 2 and 1/2 hour skin cancer treatment that involves an assistant standing by with a fan and a cold bottle of water to spritz the skin when the burning becomes too intense.

I am grateful to live in a place where I can get treatment...no matter how costly and uncomfortable it is. My weepiness is about more than my burnt face. I feel a spiritual weariness that comes from an awareness of the genocide going on in Gaza funded by our tax dollars. It is the knowing that there's not a politician I could vote for in the upcoming presidential election that wouldn't cause me to feel that I had betrayed my conscience. My sadness is not just about human suffering, but also about what the Earth herself is enduring because of our

carelessness and greed.

So here we are in the liturgical season of Lent. It is a good time to pray, repent, and not just give things up... but also take things up. Maybe this Lent we should all think about picking up some responsibility. By that, I mean that every one of us can take some responsibility for the suffering we see in the comings and goings of our daily lives. We all need to do our part to work together sharing in the suffering of our communities. Because our government has chosen to fully fund the lucrative nuclear arms race, regardless of international law and the treaties we have signed, we will be paying [\\$132 billion for 12 new COLUMBIA class subs.](#) over the next 10 years. How can the budgets for food, schools, and children not suffer? States down South are passing legislation that reverses [child labor laws.](#) We once looked at laws as a way of protecting children... but we can no longer rely on our government to do that. We can no longer rely on hospitals to give us great health care. We can no longer count on

(Please see: Notes, p9)