



# Fertile Ground

Journal of Peace House, the Kalamazoo Quaker/Catholic Worker

Issue 14

November 2015

## House Notes

by Jen DeWaele

At four o'clock I make the coffee for our volunteers, and I hear the sounds of Peace House starting up behind me...banging up the front steps, screen door opening, back pack dropping, warm welcomes from our volunteers... "Well here you are! Come on in! How are you doing? What's in your backpack? Let's open that book— what do you have in here?" I hear kids excited to see the people they work with every week, excited to share about their day, and I hear our volunteers just loving the time with the kids they know. As one of our volunteers, Steve Barber likes to put it: "It's like being a grandpa for two hours." It's exactly what I remember from my time arriving home after a long day of school—running home, throwing my backpack on the ground, checking in with my mom, and then getting into my homework at the kitchen table with a snack. It's one of the most consistent, loving, stable memories from my childhood, and it's what we try to recreate here Monday through Thursday afternoon.

So far this fall, Peace House has been full to the brim nearly every afternoon. It was a very strong summer, and the momentum has carried into the fall. Sunny, warm days deep into November have translated into a full playground, which in turn leads to houses full of kids working on homework with their favorite volunteers. We're trying to make sure that each kid gets enough of both: time to run around, stretch the body and burn up energy; time to sit and focus, with a snack and loving attention. We've gotten to know our young friends pretty well, how to balance the dosages of fun and focus. We know who needs to do their homework right away and who needs to blow off steam before they can settle again. We have mastered the art of the intercom and the transitions between inside and outside. "Have you seen so and so? Ok, we have a spot for them, send them in." Stamps are made in the

homework book, a prize is chosen, the screen door slams on their way out and quickly slams again as the next kid arrives out of breath from running in. The newcomer is quickly connected with the volunteer who they are working with that day, and the routine begins again: "What would you like for snack? How was your day? Let's see what kind of work you have today".

The rule in years past has been that middle and high schoolers come only on their day, Wednesday. We relaxed that rule this year, figuring it was cruel to keep these kids away from the basketball court all week. We decided that as long as these older kids were a positive presence, they would be allowed to stay. It was a great decision, because, almost immediately, our teens and young adults started showing amazing leadership. We



*The new and improved basketball court was the hot place to be this summer!*

we were catching them promoting Peace House values left and right. They were stopping kids who weren't making the best choice, and encouraging them to think about it, work it out and make Peace House choices. As a result of being so impressed, we have hired Tonjia, Marcello and Antoinette, one of whom is on duty each day. They can be found here many times when they're not working as well, supporting the younger ones, and actively building and bringing up

community. It's been one of the best things about our fall here at Peace House.

Teen group Wednesdays have continued strong, with many days finding Jerry, Molly, and Mike on duty. They have revamped how middle and high-schooler's are rewarded for their work. At the beginning of the year, each student created goals for the semester. At regular intervals through the fall, Peace House checks in online and makes sure all the assignments have been cared for, and we talk strategy about connecting with teachers and following up with missing assignments. We have a point system that is rewarded with gift cards, or prizes of their request. The Jeter's Leaders have been an incredible asset, as usual, helping with programming, round table discussions on current topics, community

*(Continued on page 4)*

November 2015

Dear Friends,

*Here at Peace House, we do not spend much time on numbers. That is to say, we do not keep counts of the number and ages of the kids who participate in our activities. We do not compare one week to the next and try to calculate why that number might have changed. We do not track kids as they progress through school. We do not keep numbers to create a picture of what “success” might look like.*

*We don’t do data; we do people. We encourage kids to do their homework and read. We invite them to consider alternative options to fighting. We listen. We play with them. We look for opportunities to broaden perspectives. We discuss and debate. We learn from them. Our hope lies in this work and in the friendships formed.*

*I do have one number to share that I’m really proud of: 351. That is the number of hours the elementary age kids collectively have spent on homework this fall so far. I know this number because we give each kid a stamp for every 20 minutes spent on homework and reading. Five stamps earns a prize. I just counted up 1,054 stamps in our book!*



*Dominic and Tonjia help out by grilling hot dogs for the Peace House talent show.*

*This number reflects the extent to which we rely on our extended community of volunteers. Almost all of these hours doing homework are a 1:1 ratio of kid/volunteer. We are so grateful for the many people who choose to give up time in their week to come to Peace House and share their skills and love for kids.*

*As we put this newsletter together for the 14th time (first edition: spring 2009), I can say this: I was really proud of the leadership demonstrated by Peace House teenagers this summer. Many of these young people have been with us for years, and they are*

*developing into caring, capable young adults. We are grateful to have such strong role models for the younger kids. You cannot put a number or statistic on this.*

*Please remember Peace House as we approach the season of giving. We will continue to strive for success, whatever that may look like.*

*With a grateful heart,  
Molly Mechtenberg  
for Peace House*

*P.S. If you need a tax deduction for your gift to Peace House please contact us.*

# On Privilege and Plunder

by Jerry Berrigan

*We at Peace House have been reading Ta-Nehisi Coates' new book, Between the World and Me (Spiegel and Grau, 2015). Structured as a letter to his teenage son, Coates' book is a wake-up call from the American dream and a passionate challenge to the idea that we live in a post-racial society.*

Baltimore, January 1993, twelfth grade. Half a foot of wet snow has fallen in the night, delaying the start of school by a couple of hours. I sleep late, shower, eat a substantial breakfast, and walk seven blocks to the corner of North Avenue and Charles Street, where I await the arrival of the #3 bus. By and by a pair of middle-aged black men approach the bus stop, and I am made to overhear their conversation, which is relevant to me. "See that white boy?" the one asks the other. "I want to put the bite on his ass!"

I am immediately on high alert. It feels more like the introduction to some malevolent sport-level hassling than to a passionate beatdown, but I'm not interested in either option, nor in splitting hairs. Self preservation is the key. So when the speaker takes a step toward my back with the address of "Hey, white boy!" I run. I board the bus many blocks upstream, leaving their final chastisement ("You better run, white boy!") to the wind.

A minor incident, really; in my seventeen years I had experienced worse. Although I avoid that intersection for the next couple of weeks and wait for my bus at a corner nearby, I am able this time to prevent an assault on my person. I never even report the incident to my parents. I am just finishing up my time, anyway; by year's end I will have left the concrete and brick of my hometown for the "fair arcadian hill" of Kalamazoo College, a place paradoxically of escape from and deeper engagement with the world.

However, it is safe to assume that the men who approached me on that corner did not get out. There was no conceivable new beginning for them in September '93, no second act, no chance to self-reinvent. Quite possibly, in the whole of their lives, neither of these men ever had an interaction either with an individual white person or with the principality known as "The Man" which was positive, affirming, or life-giving in any way. If their lives were like so many black Baltimoreans', their entire existence was circumscribed by a power structure which would privilege me even as it marginalized them.

Ta-Nehisi Coates had not yet come of age or published an article, but these men inherently knew the truth in what he would one day write: that the relationship between black and white in America is fundamentally defined by white plunder and the violation of black bodies, that those white people not actively engaged in this activity are party to it, complicit in it, and benefit from it. These men knew this, and it filled them with a hopelessness and rage which would find one expression that morning in a conversation about taking a chunk out of my ass.

Like me, Ta-Nehisi Coates was a high school senior in 1993, grew up within a mile of my home in the Reservoir Hill neighborhood, and was able to escape to university and the relative freedom of a successful career

## Reflections on Race and Racism

by Antoinette Walker, OOAK (One of a Kind)

*On Nov. 8, Antoinette Walker and five other young people from Peace House attended Ta-Nehisi Coates' address in Kalamazoo, at which Coates reflected on the history of African Americans as a "criminal class" in America. Her thoughts are shared below.*

After I heard this speech my mind was racing. It seems to me as a society we are all supposed to work together but instead society is picking on and downgrading black people, and throwing them under the bus. Why is that?

Putting a black man in prison does not simply affect him, it affects his family, and ultimately the community suffers when so many black men are taken out of it. Once released, those who want to improve themselves find they are denied access to a whole suite of services that could help them. Many are completely cut out of creating a better life.

What I get from this is, everyone makes mistakes. Of course, you can learn from your mistakes. But the fact that you are not given the opportunity to change, and to prove that you are learning, based on your skin color, is crazy. That's just like telling you in other words you might as well go back to doing what you were doing before because that's how we see you anyway.

Why should my skin color define how I am seen in the world? My skin color doesn't tell you what's in my heart and mind.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 1)

service projects and field trips.

Let me tell you about our summer...every year we tell you that we had the best summer ever, and guess what?! It happened again. We had a great core group, in addition to the four of us, with Barb Elliott, Antoinette Walker, and Ivy McKee on staff every day. Each of them brought different things to the mix and strengthened us in ways we needed. We had many volunteers, and many, many kids. The new basketball hoop brought many kids here who wouldn't usually come by, and they started by playing ball, and would often stay for a lacrosse game, or a writing workshop. The hoop and new driveway was in use every minute that we were open. We were very strategic about different age groups, splitting the time and the hoop level into different parts of the day. We were even honored to host a K College women's basketball player for two days to run drills with the younger kids.

Mid-summer, Joe and Tom Lucking contacted us with the idea of building a gaga pit in the back yard as Joe's Eagle Scout project. We welcomed the idea, and found the perfect spot at the edge of the yard and woods. It has competed with the new hoop for most popular Peace House activity since it came to life. It's a quick game, and great for practicing how to get eliminated gracefully, because within minutes a new game has started, and you're back in. Check out the photo on the next page!

The Kalamazoo Nature Center was a big part of our summer action. In the last year, the Sisters of St. Joseph have funded a full time outreach position at the KNC specifically for children on the Eastside. We and the kids at Peace House have benefited greatly from this. Carolyn Johnson, their Urban Outreach Coordinator, visited us weekly, bringing us journals and crafts for the back yard, and taking van loads of kids on field trips to local parks for bug hunting, or out to the Nature Center for the high ropes course and canopy zip line.

The math porch and reading porch were in full effect, with lots of action every time they were open, and supported in the end by our regular and much loved trips at the end of the summer to Bookbug and Treat Street for a book of their choice, and an ice cream cone— complete with googly eyes. Our math porch volunteers were constantly finding ways to get kids excited about math- we had middle schoolers playing... *ahem*... "War" by comparing fractions for an hour (!) and littler kids getting into geometry by

building all sorts of different shapes. Our reading porch volunteers brought special snacks and would set out new and interesting books to keep kids curious. As usual, our volunteers are specialists in getting to know the kids they work with, and would set aside books they knew certain people would really enjoy, or would bring books from home or the library that would be helpful to kids who were still learning to read.

We welcomed Open Roads for the 7th season this



Volunteer Dan Salerno helps Daevante carve a pumpkin at our annual Pumpkin Carving event.

summer. They were busy every time they opened our garage to fix bikes— we had bikes up along the garage, waiting for new gears, new tubes, and sometimes just a little air in the tires and some conversation to go along with the fix. It was and always is an integral part of our summer.

A new partnership was forged this summer with RAWK: Read and Write Kalamazoo. Anne Hensley and Emily Kastner have been inspiring kids all over Kalamazoo to get completely geeked about writing, and we wanted in. We were able to send one student to their week long middle school workshop, and she loved it. Since then, they have visited us during one of our Wednesday middle/high school sessions (see page 6), and two of the high schoolers have continued their work with RAWK in their weekend workshops and are currently co-editing their latest magazine project.

What else did we do this summer? Cooking, gardening, craft projects, playground time, bug catching, science experiments, kickball, lacrosse, football, soccer, tag, sand box, make believe restaurant time, poetry workshops, bowling, water balloons, scavenger hunts, field trips, obstacle courses, dance routines, and lots of laughing, calling

each other to circle, hugs and high fives.

This fall we celebrated two students entering their senior year in high school by hosting photo sessions in the backyard. Our friend Anne Anderson spent the afternoon here taking hundreds of pictures to capture this time in their lives. As time goes by, and our neighbors reach new milestones, we are working to figure out how to stay in their lives and still support them in their changing needs. The world suddenly gets much much bigger when you leave school, and we want them to know that we'll always be here for them.

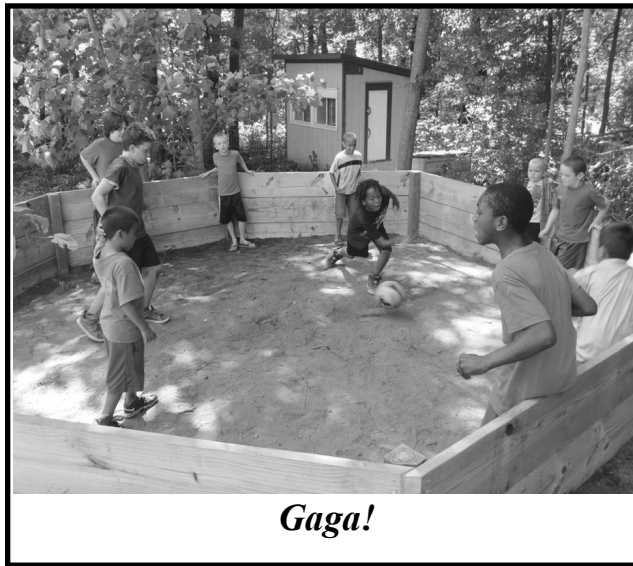
Our kids are reaching new milestones too. Amos started his sixth grade year at Linden Grove middle school, and this fall played soccer, ran cross country and started to learn the saxophone. Clara and Jonah are in third grade, and since they are in a public Montessori school, are enjoying the third year with their beloved teachers. They are also continuing to play soccer and are reading up a storm, when they're not spying on their parents. Alice and Leah have left Bread and Roses and have started kindergarten. They are both diving in and loving the new learning and dynamics of a different school. They are making new friends, riding the bus with Jonah and Clara and loving their teachers and the new challenges of kindergarten.

This summer and fall, we have been putting major emphasis on maintaining a culture of peace and being proactive about resolving conflict among kids in and out of Peace House. Sometimes there are arguments here. They might start here or they might be continuations of problems that began out in the neighborhood or in school. In either case, we have a well-established practice of bringing the concerned parties together to come to resolution, either through mediation or discussion. Sometimes it takes more than one intervention to get things right. Sometimes emotions are so high that we'll follow kids down the street, or even all the way home, to make sure that things stay cool. Kids don't always end up making the right decision, but it certainly isn't going to be because of a lack of persistence on our part.

Those who have been coming here for a while know how the process works. They've learned to work things out, and they have been our critical mass that keeps Peace Culture self-perpetuating. The challenge usually comes on the few occasions when we get sudden influxes of new kids. Unacculturated to our expectations, they may come looking to fight, to recruit people to fight, or just to be disruptive. Our regulars struggle with their difficult choices—to call their friends, neighbors and family into the circle of what we espouse, to head on up to the corner, or to just quietly let it be known that they're not into fighting; they're at Peace House. We actively work with kids to not only choose to espouse peaceful values while they're here, but to also bring those values back to school or the bus with them—to choose not to engage in a fight, to choose to hold up the dignity of their fellow Peace House neighbors in the face of chosen violence. We're constantly

encouraging kids to choose to take care of each other, rather than tear each other down. The more they hear it, the more they are able to practice working together and sticking up for each other, the easier it is to make reality. Sometimes all you need is for someone to tell you it's OK to choose that—to choose care for each other, to show you what it looks like, and to help you practice it.

Love permeates. One of the most important works of



*Gaga!*

Peace House is bringing people together who would never usually get an opportunity to know each other. People who live in different neighborhoods, or come from vastly different backgrounds get to play together on our playground, or sit together over a book. When we all learn that we are the same people, with different circumstances, or different life situations, we break down bridges and build each other up. When we recognize a little of ourselves in others who we thought were different, that's when a little hope is born for the world. We are grateful to the many many people who are a part of the Peace House life, and grateful to live here and do the work that surrounds us.

"Who I Am" is a group poem written by the young people at Peace House. They chose to take parts of each of their own individual poems to create this one. Credit goes to Antoinette, Cicero and Marcello for synthesizing this work. Many thanks to Read and Write Kalamazoo (RAWK) for leading the poetry workshop.

*My eyes are light brown in the sun, they get big from time. They are telling a story, brown wide open.*

*My skin is smooth milk chocolate like a Hershey bar, like tree bark, somewhat caramel.*

*My voice is like a song going up or down depending on the beat and mood. It's soothing deep like a warm hug. It can boom like a speaker.*

*My joy is knowing I am who I am. It's being hugged up in the house. It's people succeeding.*

*My fear is being alone and hated. It's bats and not dying but dying at the hands of someone else.*

*My hope is knowing I can change myself, knowing I can make a difference. It's succeeding so I can help others to be better.*

*I see the good in everyone. I see struggle, pain, bullying, racism. I see visions of the future.*

*I feel like I need help. I feel like I can help but I have to start with me first. I feel happiness and love.*

*I will use my voice to stand up for what I believe. I will share my voice through my actions. We need to change.*

# Who I Am

By  
Marcello  
Dontavia  
Dominic  
Antoinette  
Janessa  
Dylan  
B.J.  
Amaya  
Amira  
Nevaeh  
Cicero



# SUMMER PEACE HOUSE 2015!



“Watch Me Whip/Nae Nae” @ Peace House talent show.



Enjoying a special performance with singer/songwriter Joe Reilly.



Showing off the bounty of the garden.



Playing with geometric shapes on the math porch.



Barb Elliott helping the kids stay cool.



Sand + water = delicious (and fun).



Reading porch in action!



Legomania



Getting ready for the zip line @ the Kalamazoo Nature Center

# Jerry Berrigan Presents!

In gratitude for the exemplary life of my uncle, Jerry Berrigan, who died July 27 in his home in Syracuse, NY, at the age of 95. For quiet joy, adherence to universal core values, for his doing it and not talking about it, for his understanding that each day is a sacred gift, to be shared, we are grateful.

Christmas was always at Aunt Carol and Uncle Jerry's, and after the chocolates but before the caroling parade, Jerry would depart to mark Christmas Eve with the men in the Syracuse jail. Some twenty years ago, when he learned about a bedridden man who had never spoken or communicated with anyone, Jerry decided to visit the man weekly for an hour and read him Shakespeare. And while Jerry carried on this ministry for years, it was never clear whether any words got through—but maybe they did.

He kept a garden, made granola, marched in Selma in 1965, and was arrested "more times than he could count" for protesting war, most recently on Good Friday 2011 at Hancock AFB in opposition to drone war.

He described Aunt Carol, his wife of 70 years, as follows: "Heart! Heart! Heart!" So many of us are deeply grateful for the both of them.



Jerry proudly wearing his Peace House t-shirt.

## Rejoice!

Just as we go to press, we are feeling very proud of Kalamazoo. A Nigerian woman named Rejoice, a graduate student and single mother to a preschool-aged son, who has been living in Kalamazoo since 2010, was being threatened by a very sudden and unexpected deportation order, effective December 2. If carried out, Rejoice would be forced to return to a region of Nigeria where the extremist group Boko Haram is active.

With only a couple of days to react, Rejoice's friends and supporters, including Peace House, leapt to her defense. Countless phone calls and emails were sent to immigration enforcement. Elected officials were enlisted. In the space of only two days, over 1600 signatures were attached to a petition to void the deportation. Today, the day of Rejoice's deportation hearing, we learned that our efforts worked. The deportation is cancelled, and Rejoice will not need to contact immigration again until May. It's an amazing victory for the community and for Rejoice and her son, proof that when people come together with love and with purpose, amazing things can happen.



Carolyn Johnson of the Kalamazoo Nature Center with kids from Peace House as they explore the creek.

## Peace House Holiday Party!

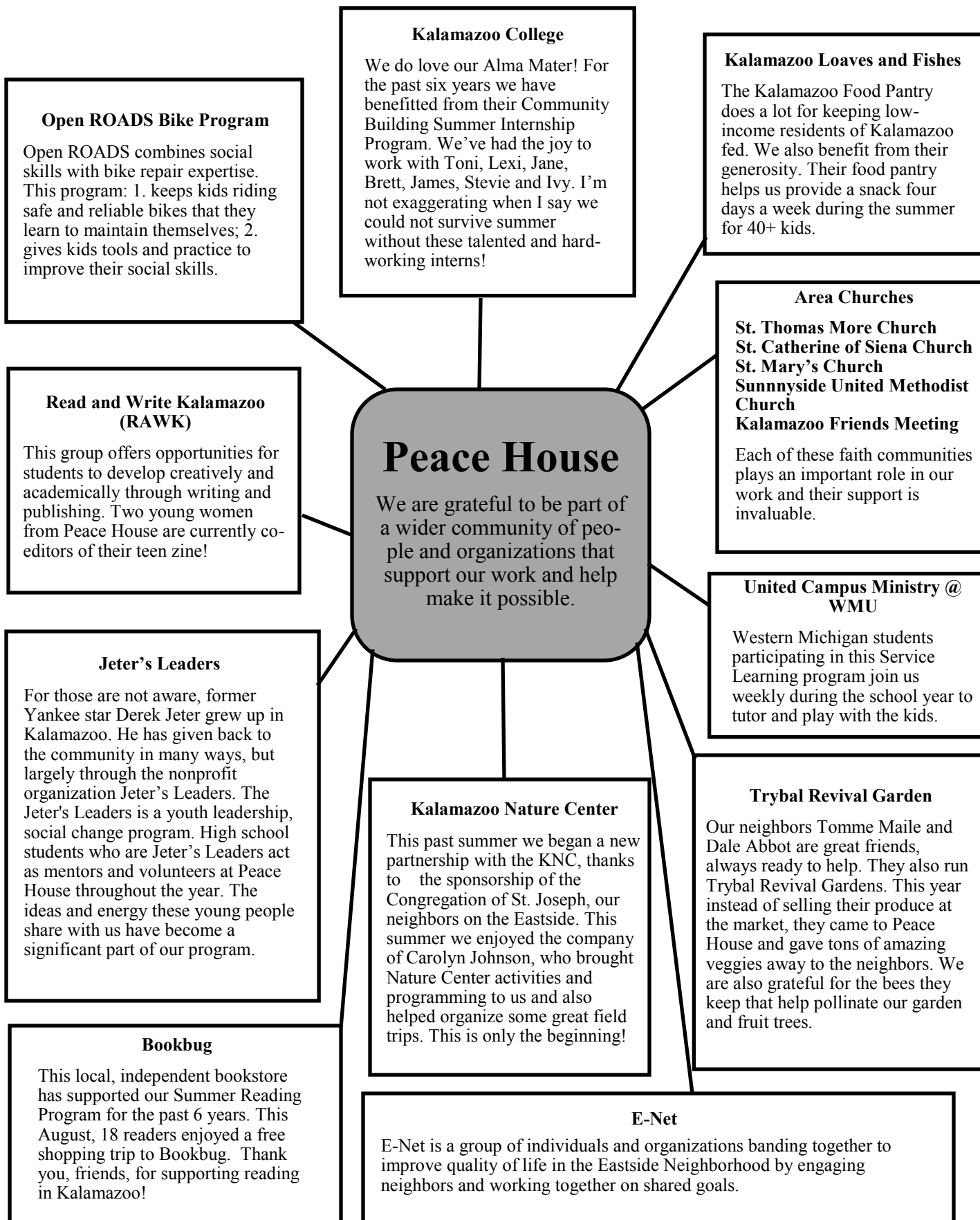
### Needed:

- \* Donations of cookies
- \* Hats, socks and mittens for kids of all ages
- \* Volunteers to help with the clean-up after the party, 7—8 pm
- \* Financial support!

Please call or email for more information!



# A Web of Work for Social Change



(Continued from page 3)

in a meaningful line of work. His recollection of his childhood is mostly bleak, and tainted by the overarching presence of fear. In an address to his son, in *Between the World and Me*, he recalls,

*When I was your age the only people I knew were black, and all of them were powerfully, adamantly, dangerously afraid. . . . To be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world, before all the guns, fists, knives, crack, rape, and disease. The nakedness is not an error, nor pathology. The nakedness is the correct and intended result of policy, the predictable upshot of people forced for centuries to live under fear.*

Black people in the inner city, Coates relates, live in constant, daily fear both of direct threats “to their bodies” (a powerful original phrase) from rivals and from the police, and carry an existential dread based in the knowledge (which is based in experience) that things will never improve, that the system is structured so as to negate any real hope for children or generations to come. *Parents cannot guarantee the safety of their children.*

I need to emphasize that the three or four times growing up that I was made to fear of my safety because of my whiteness, while indeed terrible, did not make me “naked before the elements of the world.” What we all share in this story—black and white—is a helplessness before the power of American white supremacy, which defines our roles, hopes, territories and fears. We have yet to overcome.



Author Ta-Nehisi Coates spoke in Kalamazoo on Nov. 8.

My parents moved to Reservoir Hill in 1973, placing themselves intentionally in that poor, mostly black neighborhood as an act of solidarity and reconciliation. While the main work of Jonah House, the community they formed and in which I was raised, was resistance to war and nuclear weapons, they maintained a food program for 22 years out of our front door. We ate the same food that was given away. My father had become radicalized through his work as a priest in the black community in the 1950’s and ‘60’s. In 1965 he wrote:

*Because whites insist on regarding him as “different,” the Negro has no choice but to react in defense, seeing the white as different also, and speaking of him as the “White Man,” or “The Man.” The white believes, with profound conviction, that the Negro is America’s problem or the community’s problem or someone else’s problem, but seldom his problem. Whereas, the Negro knows that the white is his problem, and that he has no other. In fact, Negro hopelessness, when it is encountered, centers on the fact that he is fenced in and engulfed with white “problems,” more than one hundred and fifty million of them, and his despair arises from the fact that there are just too many. (*No More Strangers*: Macmillan, 1965)*

Two points here about my father and what he is saying. First, he was a relentless, even brutal seeker of the truth. He was perennially, absolutely dissatisfied with the American Dream and the dreamers who dream it. In his understanding, the Dream was a fantasy of greed from the beginning, tempting white men in America to take more than their share. And so slavery, the conquest of our continent, Vietnam, Iraq all became episodes in an overall narrative of plunder, made palatable to white Americans by racist storytelling and ideology. Meanwhile, the rising imperial tide lifts many boats, and our consciences are mollified. White people are the problem. If we wish to be helpful in some way, let’s start by wrestling with that idea.

Secondly, I highlight his word “responsibility,” because in his understanding, we are only mature, Christian, human, inasmuch as we are willing to take responsibility for the major abuses of the human and ecological community. The bigger the violation, the more necessary a commensurate nonviolent response. And so my parents were separated 11 of their 29 years of marriage by prison for acts of civil disobedience against the American war machine. Responsibility.

1998: I have graduated from college and am back in Baltimore for a year. I am learning more about the silent economic warfare our country has been waging against Iraq since the alleged end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. UNICEF published a report in 1999 alleging that a half-million Iraqi children under the age of 5 had died of preventable disease as a result of UN/US Sanctions which prohibit the sale of Iraqi oil and forbid the import to Iraq of food, medicine, and water treatment chemicals. Iraq at this time has a population of 23 million people. Secretary of State Madeline Albright, when confronted with this figure on national television, has said, “the price...we think the price is worth it.”

I do not think the price is worth it, and I decide to see the front lines of American imperial ambition for myself. I join a delegation organized by the group Voices in the Wilderness to violate the sanctions by bringing

in medical supplies, a felony prosecutable by the Treasury Department. On my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday I am in Baghdad, touring a hospital where parents and physicians helplessly watch children succumb to common ailments, especially waterborne disease. The hospitals in the southern city of Basra keep photo albums—eventual evidence in a war crimes prosecution, if there were justice—of children born with horrendous defects attributable to our use of uranium munitions in the southern Iraqi battlefields.

I commit to the people I meet— whose hospitality and kindness is remarkable, given the state of things—that I will tell their story, and work to bring about redress for the harms they have been forced to endure. In reality I will spend the next several years broken by what I have experienced and what it means. Which is this: In 1991, today, in Baghdad as in West Baltimore, parents cannot guarantee the safety of their children.

As we go to press, fifteen months or so into the Black Lives Matter movement, men associated with the Islamic State have killed 128 people in Paris. The reaction on both sides of the Atlantic is as tragic as it is predictable. More bombings, more border control, more racism, more fear, more demonization of people who have been forced to endure the unendurable. Much hay to be made by opportunistic politicians such as Michigan's governor Rick Snyder, declaring our state unwilling to accept refugees from Syria.

It is by this manufacture of racist fear that Americans are manipulated into accepting intolerable acts of plunder, both at home and abroad. In 1968, Thomas Merton reflected on the fear mechanism and its contributions to nuclear brinkmanship, war in Vietnam, and oppression in the cities. His analysis is germane to today's American politics and the caricatures of Muslims and American black people which saturate both airwaves and internet:

*“The population of the affluent world is nourished on a steady diet of brutal mythology and hallucination, kept at a constant pitch of high tension by a life that is intrinsically violent in that it forces a large part of the population to submit to an existence which is humanly intolerable... [T]he crime which breaks out of the ghetto is only the fruit of a larger and more pervasive violence: the injustice which forces people to live in the ghetto in the first place. The problem... [is] of a whole social structure which is outwardly ordered and respectable, and inwardly ridden by psychopathic obsessions and delusions.” (Faith and Violence: Notre Dame Press, 1968)*

Between the World and Me has made a lot of waves in our circle of friends. Just about everyone we know has read and been challenged by the book, and it feels to us all like an honest attempt at truth-telling. When Ta-Nehisi Coates spoke in Kalamazoo earlier this month, he (properly) took umbrage when asked why he thought so many white people had appreciated his book. As part of his answer, he said, “It’s a human story. Human beings are going to identify with it.”

A true representation of the human experience transcends boundaries. Coates’ book has shed light on a transcendent human value: the right of every parent to a modest hope for the safety of their children, free from fear of a national apparatus which can kill with impunity. Security is the basic obligation of parent to child: I will take care of you. All parents know this. If we let it, this human bond can motivate us in a sustained work for a little more justice than we have now.

In an article for the *Atlantic* (June 2014), Coates argued that black Americans are owed a substantial sum in reparations to begin to recover from the harm caused by 400 years of white supremacy. In this Tea Party era, such an idea is of course a political non-starter, but that is beside the point. The point is that he is right: a debt is owed. White people who care: it is our move. If we see black people as human, if we yearn for kinship (as so many of us do), we must be willing to work for it, risk for it, maybe suffer for it, and we need to learn to listen better. In Coates, in Black Lives Matter, in many others, we have powerful voices of black leadership. Let us hear them; may we each discover a path to justice, and have the courage to walk it as best we can.

## Public Witness to Ground the Drones

*All vigils happen at the gates of the Michigan Air National Guard Base, 3357 Dickman Ave., Battle Creek.*

**Monthly vigils** for peace will happen in 2015 the first Saturday of each month from 12–1 pm, followed by lunch. The dates are:

**December 5**

**January 2**

**February 6**

**March 5**

**April 2**

**May 7**



*Drones are not necessary and do not make us safe! Please join us in standing for peace.*



# Peace House

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Kalamazoo, MI 49048

*Fertile Ground* is sent twice a year to friends and supporters of Peace House. If you would rather not receive this newsletter, please return this page with a note to that effect. If you would like to receive periodic electronic updates from us (no more than twice a month), please visit [peacehousekzoo.org](http://peacehousekzoo.org) and click on "Stay in Touch."

*"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us." —Dorothy Day*

## Who we are

Peace House, a community in the Catholic Worker movement, is dedicated to fostering peace, justice and relationship in the Eastside neighborhood of Kalamazoo. We believe that the good of each person is bound to the well-being of society as a whole; therefore we advocate taking personal responsibility for creating, in the words of Catholic Worker cofounder Peter Maurin, "a new society within the shell of the old...a place where it is easier for people to be good." We are here to be a resource for our neighbors. We rely on the involvement of a loving, dedicated extended community to do this work. **Please feel free to visit, call or send an e-mail.**

**Jen and Mike DeWaele**

**Clara and Alice**

**321 Phelps Ave.**

**Jerry and Molly Mechtenberg-Berrigan**

**Amos, Jonah and Leah**

**313 Phelps Ave.**

**Kalamazoo, MI 49048**

**(269) 492-1206**

**[peacehouse@peacehousekzoo.org](mailto:peacehouse@peacehousekzoo.org)**

## How you can be a part

**We welcome and celebrate ALL people, regardless of race, religion, political affiliation, nationality, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or ability.**

- ◆ See page eight for ways to help out with our Holiday Party.
- ◆ We always need prizes (\$1–\$2) for our "prize box." These are small rewards and toys that kids select after they have earned enough homework stamps.
- ◆ Come to our events and vigils.
- ◆ Join our email list to get regular updates and discover other ways to participate. To do this, go to our website [peacehousekzoo.org](http://peacehousekzoo.org) and click on "Stay in Touch" and then "Join our mailing list."
- ◆ Spread the word! If you know of someone who may be interested, please tell them about Peace House!