



Fertile Ground

Journal of Peace House, the Kalamazoo Quaker/Catholic Worker

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House Notes

By Jen DeWaele

“You let **them** work here?! You don’t know how they act at home!”: taken from a moment with a new Peace House kid as the energy of the day swirled around us. I immediately and kindly replied “Of course! They do an excellent job working for Peace House—maybe you can work here one day too!” I chuckled, because they walked away shaking their head, but in my heart, it was a reminder of the core of our work and our life here. For each of us—those who live here, the ones who volunteer here, the kids who come every day— Peace House is a place for us to practice being our best selves. It is a place where the worries of the rest of our lives are put on hold, and we give each other the space to practice kindness, practice working things out with each other, practice being a human family to each other. As we have grown over the years, we have seen the spirit of this place take root in the kids who know it and come year after year. More and more, the ownership of what happens at Peace House is shared between volunteers, kids who work here, kids who are doing their homework and reminding each other of “what we do at Peace House,” and ourselves.

Last week Tuesday was a great example of this. Diane Donovan arrived at 2 pm to help Mike and me pull the house together to host our neighbors for homework, and before 4, the house was shining and clean, ready to go. A little before 4, one of our volunteers popped next door with dinner for the nine of us to share when

Peace House closed up for the day. Other volunteers were arriving with snacks for the kids. Steve arrived with his guitar, broke into impromptu song, and filled the house with music and the smiles that small graces like these always bring. The YAB (Youth Advisory Board — see page 2), along with Peresheanna (who has thankfully returned to lend us rock solid support) reported in to get their water bottles, walkie talkies and a quick snack, and headed out to support the outside play. The younger kids were starting to trickle in with homework, hugs and reports from their day, and we were off on a

Peace House afternoon. Solidarity and community are the feelings that come to my heart on days like this— reminders that sometimes the invitation is all that’s needed in order to create the beloved community.

Our winter was quieter than we like it, the cold and the dark tend to keep kids inside a lot more, and closer to home. During our spring planning retreat, we talked of throwing a few parties to get the word out about Peace House, invite more families, and celebrate. The week we returned from spring break, however, everyone came back! We have had a least 20 new kids join us this spring, on top of

our regular numbers, bringing us past thirty kids some days. We immediately decided to start our summer levels of volunteers, and asked several older neighborhood kids to help us every day. Every day we have three students from our Youth Advisory Board, Peresheanna, and one of us is outside to make sure that it’s a fun and positive place to play basketball, gaga, be in the sand box, throw the football, and be with friends. We have also been graced with a few extra (super talented) volunteers to make sure



A rare moment for Damarion — standing still.

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Peace House Youth Advisory Board

By Molly Mechtenberg

Peace House is excited to announce the formation of our first ever Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The YAB is made up of high school age young people who live in the Eastside neighborhood and have been participating in Peace House for a significant period of time. The purpose of the group is to learn leadership skills, give feedback on and help plan Peace House programming, and get trained to be paid youth workers at Peace House. We have been meeting one Wednesday per month since January.

YAB members are (from upper left): Dylan Howard, Amos Mechtenberg-Berrigan, Jaylen Pratt, Jaleen Johnson, Gary Luckett, Bahiyyah Daniels and senior member Pereshieanna Smith (Amaya Whitfield is not pictured).

We at Peace House are thrilled with this incredibly talented and dedicated group of young people. At our YAB meetings we cover topics on what it means to be a good leader, how to talk to kids and how to intervene in conflict. After completing 10 hours of volunteer service, YAB members qualify for a paid job here at Peace House.



Gary and Jaleen run the bean bag game at our final day of afterschool programming.

This spring, the number of kids coming to Peace House jumped dramatically when the weather warmed. The YAB was eager and ready to jump into action and assist us with the after-school program. They pretty much saved the day for us, and did so with a joyful and positive attitude. At our final end of the school year event, YAB members prepared and ran activities such as face painting, yard games, a slam dunk contest and candy jar guessing game.

We at Peace House believe that investing in young people is essential. We watched high school students across the nation rise up as leaders against gun violence this year. We see the leadership potential of our teenage neighbors, who sometimes have significant obstacles to overcome as they grow into adulthood. Whether you come from Parkland, Florida or Kalamazoo, Michigan, these teenagers are future leaders who will shape our neighborhoods, cities and country.

One activity we did at a YAB meeting involved writing down what we admire in leaders. They filled in the blank: "I admire others who _____." We then switched the phrase "I admire others" with "I am powerful when I..." Here is what we came up with:

- I am powerful when I stick up for others.
- I am powerful when I am courageous.
- I am powerful when I treat others kindly.
- I am powerful when I take responsibility for my actions.

And here is my adult version:

We are powerful when we invest in young people.

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that all kids who want homework help, or just to sit and read a book on the couch with an adult, are able to participate.

When you are a kid, sometimes your energy is just too much for you! We are experimenting with an additional way to earn



Jaleah and Jessica attempt to master a ropes course challenge at the Kalamazoo Nature Center

tickets for prizes (in addition to homework). This spring Molly created the Peace House Ninja Warrior course, providing volunteers with a list of athletic feats to challenge kids.

Completing this three times (three

days) gets you a whole ninja suit. It's been really popular, and we are working hard to keep up with new challenges. Trying to reward everyone all the time for being awesome, Mike created "I rocked it at Peace House" tickets. Kids earn these for doing a great job, and earn popsicles for accumulating them over time. All these things have gone into making spring at Peace House very busy, and very fun.

This week was the first meeting of the Parent Advisory Board. We invited the parents of several kids who have been coming to Peace House to be involved a little more in giving us feedback. It was a wonderful evening of food and hearing how we can connect more. We are looking forward to creating a calendar of upcoming events to share with parents and guardians, so they can be more involved, reminding kids in a more formal way that their families want them to do homework while they're here— knowing that your family is sending you here for a lot

of good reasons is a great reminder in the midst of the daily routine. It was an honor and a reminder of the trust we have built over time to hear that many times we are the first to see kids after school and check in with them about their day. We moved to this neighborhood purposefully to serve the needs of the neighborhood, and hope to challenge ourselves to meet that goal in a deeper and more meaningful way every year. Inviting and hearing from parents should be a big part of our work here, and we are looking forward to making the invitation to make this more of a regular reality.

Our own kids are thriving—we are on the brink of Amos entering high school at Kalamazoo Central, Clara and Jonah entering sixth grade at Linden Grove, and Leah and Alice forging ahead into third grade at Northglade. We marvel at them all the time—they give us our fair share of challenges, but many more laughs and for that we are grateful.

Our garden, under the patient care of Tomme Maile is growing (despite the five groundhogs he caught). A big thanks to Amelia Katanski's "A Seat in the Garden" class at Kalamazoo College—we hosted three hardworking K students who helped us get it



Ka'Nahveah and Kathy enjoy a book together

off the ground this year.

We are constantly planning our summer, which is when we hit the big time around here. It's going to be a great one! We have many of our favorites returning: Read and

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Write Kalamazoo; Felicia Thomas, our semi-pro basketball coach; Clean Water for the World; Open ROADS; Sewing camp (this time with parents and children); Jeter's Leaders; and of course, the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Check out our Facebook page to fill your feed with pictures of kids having fun, or look out for all the news of the summer in our fall newsletter.

This year will be a little different—we are closing a week and a half early and reopening in late August for several big field trips—we have an adventure day planned for thirty kids at the Nature Center, a trip to Full Blast water park in Battle Creek, and the Nature

Center is also helping us plan a canoe trip down the Kalamazoo River for the teenagers, something we've wanted to do for years! We are looking forward to spending time with Peace House kids in a different way—experiencing things out in the world together.

As always, we are grateful to you, our many supporters who are constantly, and in myriad ways making this life and work possible for everyone who walks through our door. Thank you for believing in the work, and generously supporting in the way that you can. We love to see you! Please let us know if you are interested in stopping by, or finding out one of the many ways you can be involved.

Jean Gump, Presente!

The Kalamazoo peace movement lost a grandmother, mentor and dear friend when Jean Gump's spirit left this world March 16, following a brain hemorrhage. She was 90 years old.

In the mid-1990s, when the founding members of Peace House were students at Kalamazoo College, Jean and Joe Gump (RIP 2014) supported our activities with the NonViolent Student Organization, showing up regularly to lead dinner/discussion events, joining us in trips to the Pentagon and Project ELF to resist war, and accommodating us at their farmhouse in Bloomingdale, MI for beautiful home cooking, replete with linen, gravy boats, and coconut custard pie. They even hosted our graduation party.



Jean and Joe Gump were married in 1949 and raised twelve children in the Chicago suburb of Morton Grove. When their son Joseph, distressed in 1965 by television images of southern white terrorism against black people, asked Jean what she was going to do about it, she left Joe in charge of the roost and caught the next plane to Alabama to march with Dr. King from Selma to Montgomery. Thus began what The New York Times called Jean's "50-year marathon of social activism" on the issues of civil rights, gun control, and nuclear disarmament.

Jean upped the ante in 1986 with her participation in the Silo Plowshares action in Missouri, for which she served a prison sentence of four years. Joe Gump quickly followed suit: he quit his job as an electrical engineer, and within a year had also participated in a plowshares action, for which he served a three year sentence.

After prison Jean and Joe retired to their farmhouse in Bloomingdale and became active in peace and justice work in Kalamazoo. In 1997 they traveled illegally to Iraq to witness the human devastation caused by UN/US Sanctions. They were founding members in 2002 of Kalamazoo Non-Violent Opponents of War (KNOW). When we returned to Kalamazoo in 2006 to start Peace House, Jean and Joe offered encouragement, advice, and more of their famous, top-grade hospitality.

What drew us college activists to Jean and Joe back in the 1990s was not just the strength of their convictions, though these were admirable and clearly quite powerful. What drew us in was, quite simply, Jean and Joe: they were joyful, and funny, and altogether irresistible. Their commitment to peace and justice came out of a deep well of enthusiasm and love. It was all of the same piece.

Jean Gump, presente! Your life was a model of how great a human life can be. We will never forget you.

How do you tell the kids that Grandma is in jail for resisting nuclear weapons?

By Frida Berrigan

Introduction by Jerry Berrigan

Molly, Amos, Jonah, Leah and I were on our own unconventional version of Spring Break when we learned of mom's action for peace. In early April, we headed north, spending part of our week at Anathoth Community Farm, the agrarian outpost of antinuclear and pro-peace resistance on 57 acres outside of Luck, WI, where Molly and I lived for four years before moving to Kalamazoo in 2006 to start Peace House with Jen and Mike. There, supported by a fierce and loving community, we were married; there, our first child was born.



Hanging out with Grandma Liz in New York City, August 2017

Heading north to Duluth was a trip farther back in time. In January 1999 Molly and I, with all our possessions crammed into our very small car, moved there to join Loaves and Fishes Catholic Worker community, to experiment and test the convictions in our hearts. We had come to believe that the Earth was threatened, and so we needed to walk gently; that war was both permanent and unacceptably destructive of innocent lives, and must therefore be resisted; that poor people were no less human than you or I, and had quite a bit to teach us more "educated" people as well. And so the daily practice of hospitality, of welcoming people who had nothing into the two ramshackle, colorful, warm houses of hospitality we called home. There we learned about addiction and mental illness; there we were taught cribbage by career alcoholics; for fun we spent as much time as possible hiking up Lake Superior's North Shore. In Duluth we set off on a "career path," if you could call it that, of never making much money but of always trying, in our modest and imperfect way, to remain oriented to the work for justice and peace.

Spring Break coincided with winter's last great gasp; our week was wall-to-wall snow, subfreezing temps, and high winds. Our final destination was a Faith and Resistance retreat organized by the Duluth Catholic Workers, culminating in direct action against Enbridge Energy Partners. Enbridge, famous for the 2010 Kalamazoo River oil spill, plans two new pipelines from north-central Minnesota to the port of Superior, WI, crossing Native land in violation of treaties and endangering habitat for wildlife, wild rice and fish. A new chapter in a very tired old book.

And so we were among old friends and in touch with our roots when news came on April 4th that my mom had participated in a most dramatic act of civil disobedience along with six other older Catholic peace activists, longtime family friends and comrades all. Within days my sister Frida penned the article below, which summarized concisely what Mom did and why, and also touched on the complicated stew of emotions we are all carrying in the wake of the action.

Since this article came out, Mom and the others have settled into a routine in Georgia county jails. I am glad to report that she is doing very well inside. There is no small element of ministry in the presence, in a jail, of a peace activist committed to nonviolence and solidarity. When six of the King's Bay Plowshares were offered \$5000 bond and house arrest instead of further pretrial incarceration, Mom declined. We speak weekly on the phone and exchange regular postcards.

I close this long-winded introduction with a commissioning, perhaps for us all, in Mom's own words. At our wedding in June 2002, Mom and our friend Kristin Betts presented a very special and unearned gift: a friendship quilt, with 42 squares handmade by friends and family. The square from my parents, painstakingly hand-embroidered, encouraged us to *Take the time to smell the flowers/ Hear the birds/ See the stars/ Hold each other in love/ And so have the passion/ to defend Creation.*

How well we have done any of this is an open question. As for Mom, she is forging ahead.

"Our grandma is in jail," Madeline tells a woman wrestling a shopping cart at Target.

"She went over a war fence and tried to make peace," Seamus adds helpfully. "They arrested her, and she is in jail now."

"Where?" the woman asks, looking from them to me in disbelief and maybe pity.

"We don't remember," the kids say, suddenly done with their story and ready to make passionate pleas for the colorful items in the dollar section over the woman's shoulder.

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The Poor People's Campaign: A

In December 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King announced the plan to bring together poor people from across the country for a new march on Washington. This march was to demand better jobs, better homes, better



The original Poor People's Campaign March on Washington, June, 1968

education—better lives. Rev. Dr. Ralph Abernathy explained that the intention of the Poor People's Campaign of 1968 was to “dramatize the plight of America's poor of all races and make very clear that they are sick and tired of waiting for a better life.” King aligned with the struggle of poor, black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in March and April 1968. He suggested their struggle for dignity was a dramatization of the issues taken up by the Poor People's Campaign—a fight by capable, hard workers against dehumanization, discrimination and poverty wages in the richest country in the world. He knew that for the load of poverty to be lifted, the thinking and behavior of a critical mass of the American people would have to be changed.

Largely due to Dr. King's assassination in April of 1968, the campaign never reached its full potential. Now, 50 years later,

the Poor People's Campaign has been revived. In a country beset by deepening poverty, ecological devastation, systemic racism, and an economy harnessed to seemingly endless war, “The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival” beckons our nation to higher ground. It calls upon our society to see the predicaments of the most vulnerable among us and to halt the destruction of America's moral vision. In Washington and at state capitols around the country, every Monday from Mother's Day until the summer solstice on June 21, hundreds of thousands of people hope to make a new moral witness from our love for what Maya Angelou called “these yet to be united states.”

The reflections below were written by Peace House friends Ineke Way, Matt Gross and the Peace House kids (Jonah, Clara, Alice and Leah), each of whom participated in the Michigan Poor People's Campaign in Lansing, Michigan.

For more information about the Michigan and National Campaigns, check out the following sites: <www.poorpeoplescampaign.org> or <www.facebook.com/michigansppc/>



Rally on the front steps of the capitol in Lansing, June 4, 2018

Reflection from Ineke Way:

Monday, May 14 began with hard rain, the closure of I-94 due to a crash, and a determined trip to Lansing by our group from Kalamazoo (Tom Lucking, Kathy Murphy, Beverly Schmitt, and myself) to join the Michigan Poor People's Campaign rally and to support the direct action at the state capitol. The theme for this first day of the campaign was *Somebody's Hurting Our People: Children, Women and People with Disabilities Living in Poverty*.

We arrived at 11 am just as the rain stopped, and joined a multigenerational crowd in the auditorium of the Central United Methodist church next to the Capitol. The purpose of this time was to get an orientation to the day's events, make signs, build community, and focus energy for the day's theme. Speakers lined up to address the crowd, and several tables offered sign-making supplies. Completed signs and banners such as,

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National Call for Moral Revival

"Fight poverty, not the poor;" "Justice unity;" "Love is here, truth is here, change is here, we are the change" leaned against the stage and hung from the balcony surrounding the auditorium.

Speakers of all ages from across Michigan shared their experiences, inspiration, and determination. Stories were shared about struggling with disability and poverty; the effects of not having health insurance coverage; recognition that the "new Detroit" revival may provide much for those with money, but not for those who are poor. One speaker urged, "Give poor people more to look forward to than poverty and survival."

At 1:30 we marched the short distance to the Capitol steps. One chant called out by the group was: "This is what democracy looks like!" Faith leaders stood on the steps holding banners, as the crowd (estimates of participant numbers varied between 500 and 1,000) filled the area in front of the Capitol, with signs, speakers, songs, and chants. It was inspiring to see the diversity, to see children and teens actively present, along with those using canes, walkers, and/or wheel chairs to make the trek. At about 2:30, an estimated 100 protestors filled the intersection in front of the Capitol and blocked traffic in two directions. Those risking arrest stood across the intersections, and supporters filled in the space behind them. Police quickly arrived, and cordoned off the streets leading to the intersection, but after brief conversation with the leaders of the direct action, they stayed with their cars a block away from the intersection and did not approach the protestors. At about 4:30 it became clear that the police did not plan to make arrests, and the leaders of the direct action thanked those participating, stating, "Our goal today has been accomplished - our goal was to disrupt traffic; not to get arrested." At 5:30, after the rush hour traffic had been blocked, the action ended.

We traveled home, and I felt inspired, tired, and eager to look for more ways to continue to live out the fundamental principles of the Poor People's Campaign. May this be the beginning of a new season of community, of activism, and of acknowledging that: "Somebody's hurting my brother/sister/mother/father/ and it's gone of far too long... and we won't be silent any more."



Occupation of the Capitol Rotunda by Poor People's Campaign activists, May 29, 2018

Reflection from Matt Gross:

By twos and by threes we marched from the makeshift memorial cemetery we installed on the capital lawn without arrest. Solemn, strong, and determined we made ready to enter the building and flow like water around what resistance we might meet.

Through the door, barely an eyebrow lifted in our direction, we ascended the stairs to the gallery entrance above the House floor, where an active session of Congress was underway.

Into the balcony horseshoe, scores of us filed, gathered ourselves briefly, and erupted in song, speech and chant. Guards who first admonished us, joined us shoulder to shoulder, voices raised. Elected representatives either quietly left the floor amidst the din of our ardent protest, or gazed up at us in wonder, taking pictures, singing along, and lifting their hands in warm salute.

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“Georgia,” I say, but I don’t have a lot of energy to add detail to my kids’ story. They hit all the high points.

“There’s a lot going on these days,” she says. I agree, and we move on into the store and our separate errands.

I was happy not to say more at that moment, happy to avoid a sobbing breakdown at Target, happy to wrestle one little bit of normal out of a very abnormal day.

My mom, Liz McAlister, who turned 78 in November, had been arrested deep inside the King’s Bay Naval Base in St. Mary’s, Georgia in the early hours of Wednesday morning. Along with six friends, she carried banners, statements, hammers and blood onto the base. They started their action on April 4: the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King’s assassination.

Their statement made connections between nuclear weapons, white supremacy and deeply embedded racism. It is a long statement, but given that they were carrying it into a free-fire zone — where military personnel are authorized to use deadly force — there was no particular need for brevity: “We come to Kings Bay to answer the call of the prophet Isaiah (2:4) to ‘beat swords into plowshares’ by disarming the world’s deadliest nuclear weapon, the Trident submarine. We repent of the sin of white supremacy that oppresses and takes the lives of people of color here in the United States and throughout the world. We resist militarism that has employed deadly violence to enforce global domination. We believe reparations are required for stolen land, labor and lives.”

They walked onto King’s Bay Naval Station just hours after Saheed Vassell was shot and killed in a barrage of bullets by New York City police officers, just hours after hundreds of demonstrators filled the streets of Sacramento for another day, shouting “Stephon Clark, Stephon Clark, Stephon Clark” and demanding accountability after the young father of two was killed by police officers on March 18. These seven white activists know that when you are black in this country, your own corner, your grandmother’s own backyard, is a free-fire zone more dangerous than any military base.

There is indeed a lot going on these days.

The statement continues: “Dr. King said, ‘The greatest purveyor of violence in the world (today) is my own government.’ This remains true in the

midst of our endless war on terror. The United States has embraced a permanent war economy. ‘Peace through strength’ is a dangerous lie in a world that includes weapons of mass destruction on hair-trigger alert. The weapons from one Trident have the capacity to end life as we know it on planet Earth.”

Kings Bay is the largest nuclear submarine base in the world at about 16,000 acres. It is the home port of the U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet’s Trident nuclear-powered submarines. There are eight in total, two guided missile submarines and six ballistic missile submarines. These submarines were all built in Groton, Connecticut — right across the river from our home in New London. Each submarine, my mom and her friends assert, carries the capacity to cause devastation equivalent to 600 of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima, Japan.

“Nuclear weapons kill every day through our mining, production, testing, storage and dumping, primarily on indigenous native land. This weapons system is a cocked gun being held to the head of the planet. As white Catholics, we take responsibility to atone for the horrific crimes stemming from our complicity with ‘the triplets’ [of evil]. Only then can we begin to restore right relationships. We seek to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons, racism and economic exploitation.”

That is not the end, you can read the whole statement and their indictment of the United States on their Facebook group.

These sorts of actions — called Plowshares — have a nearly 40-year history, since my father and uncle and six others broke into the King of Prussia plant in Pennsylvania in 1980 to “beat swords into plowshares.” They



From left: Clare Grady, Patrick O’Neill, Liz McAlister, Fr. Steve Kelly SJ, Martha Hennessy, Mark Colville, Carmen Trotta

struck at nosecones with hammers and marked the weapons with blood to reveal the human costs and mess and suffering the weapons are built to wreak in the world.

My father participated in five of these Plowshares actions in his lifetime and helped organize countless others. Committed conspirers, steeped in active nonviolence, have carried out more than 100 of these actions since 1980. This is my mom's second action. She and her current co-defendant Clare Grady, were part of the 1983 Griffiss Plowshares in upstate New York.

My parents estimated that they spent 11 years of their 27-year marriage separated by prison, and it was mostly these actions that kept them apart and away from us. Countless life events in our family — birthdays, graduations, celebrations of all kinds — were stuttered by the absence of one of our parents. I say this with pain and loss, but no self-pity. Dad was able to attend my high school graduation, but not my brother's. We went straight from my college graduation to visit my dad in jail in Maine. I missed all the raging keggers, sweaty dance parties and tearful goodbyes that marked the end of college for my friends to sit knee-to-knee with my father in a cramped and soulless room. On chairs designed for maximum discomfort, I tried to share my momentous day and all my 22-year-old big feelings while ignoring the guards and the room crowded with a dozen others doing the same thing. We wrote thousands of letters. They often crisscrossed each other so that there was a constant weaving of story and sharing across the miles.

So, when I explained that grandma was in jail to my kids — 11-year-old Rosena, 5-year-old Seamus and 4-year-old Madeline — I felt the weight of a lifetime of missing and provisional family experiences, frequently lived in prison visiting rooms and through urgently scrawled letters.

I tried to figure out a way to talk to them that would make sense and, in thinking it through, I realized that none of this should make sense to anyone! Nuclear weapons? Absurd! Police brutality and white supremacy? Senseless! Plowshares actions with their symbolic transformation and ritual mess-making? A foolhardy act of David versus Goliath proportions!

So, I didn't try to make it make sense. I just forged ahead, grateful that they had some context: We had participated in the Good Friday Stations of the Cross organized by Catholic Worker friends at our local submarine base a few days earlier, and — the night before — we had gone to hear a dramatic reading of Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

"Hey guys, know how we went to the sub base on Friday? Grandma was arrested in a place like that late last night. She is in jail now. She and her friends broke onto the base to say that nuclear weapons are wrong. Remember how Dr. King talked about just and unjust laws?" They nodded and remembered that King said "one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." I told them that Grandma thinks that nuclear weapons — things that can destroy so much life on our planet — shouldn't be built and protected and paid for when so many people are hungry, so many kids don't have good schools to go to, so many people don't have good homes. I went on and on.

"Wait, these nuclear weapons ... They are war things?" Seamus asked.

"Yep, they are war things, bud."

"Good for grandma," he said, and that was the end of our serious conversation.

Mom and her friends are charged with misdemeanor criminal trespass and two felonies: possession of tools for the commission of a crime and interference with government property.

The kids and I didn't talk about the kind of jail time that could mean for their grandma. It is all I am thinking about right now, but they moved on, imagining out loud and with a lot of enthusiasm how grandma got by the attack dogs and police officers they had seen at the Groton Submarine Base. They were sure there was a similar set up in Georgia. "Grandma needed a ladder and a cheetah," said Madeline. "A cheetah is the only animal that can outrun dogs and police officer's bullets."

I am pretty sure no cheetahs were involved in the Kings Bay Plowshares, but I am happy my daughter sees her grandmother as a fierce and powerful anti-war activist astride a wild cat.



Each Trident sub can fire 24 missiles, each of which carries 8 independently targetable warheads. One submarine can therefore incinerate 192 cities in nuclear fire.

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We exited as we came, descended to the entrance of the House floor itself, made ready to proceed inward, and broke like a wave upon the lone and startled guard blocking the way. Barriers fell, a bold few of us slipped through the oak doors. More guards appeared, uniformed State Police joined the ranks. The energy intensified and became alarmingly, if not yet dangerously, physical.

Our protest leaders, recognizing the possibility for increased escalation, reversed our marching orders and

“It is a spiritually impoverished nation that permits infants and children to be the poorest Americans.”

—Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President,
Children’s Defense Fund

we descended, without further incident, into the ornate, multi-level rotunda at the center of the building. Thereupon we laid our bodies to the hard tile floor while others around us marched.

Not for the first time, “We Shall Overcome” “We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest” “We Won’t Be Silent Anymore” “Save Our People From Your Wars” “Everybody’s Got a Right to Live” echoed into the hallowed spaces. We continued in this way for nearly two hours, connected in spirit to

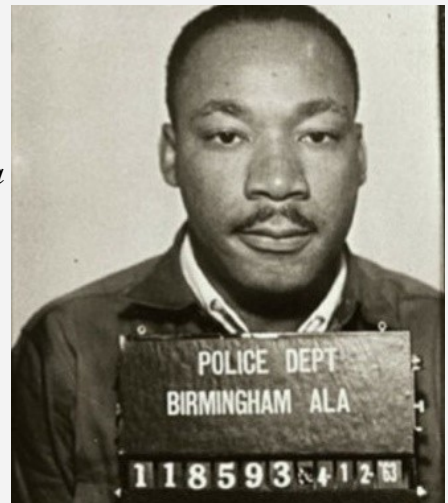
one another, to the history of this place, and to those who had similarly occupied it intermittently over the decades.

Past closing time, our planned trespassing arrests agreed upon by armed and apologetic men and women in full uniform, were we were booked on the premises, escorted individually by an officer to the building’s exit, and released without bond or bail. There, our arrest tickets in hand, were were greeted warmly by members of the larger protest. In time, we all gathered at the base of the Capitol steps. Dear words were spoken. No longer strangers, we bid farewell to our brothers and sisters in arms and departed to return to the various corners of our home State.

A Positive Peace is the Presence of Justice

Excerpt from “A Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White citizens’ “Councilor” or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to “order” than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods of direct action” who paternistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.



You're Never Too Young to Fight for Justice

Following the advice of Mark Twain to not let our kids' schooling get in the way of their education, Jerry, Molly and Mike pulled Leah, Alice, Clara and Jonah out of class to join the Poor People's Campaign action in Lansing on June 4th. The theme of the day was health and the environment, and the Michigan campaign focused on the contamination of water in poor communities and the unaffordability of water and sewer service in contrast to the recently approved permit that allows Nestle to extract and bottle millions upon millions of gallons of fresh water from Michigan aquifers with no compensation to the people of the state. We sat down with the kids to get their impressions of the day and find out what they learned.

So who wants to talk about what happened in Lansing?

Leah: First we got to make signs and have food, and then we actually went out to the capitol building, and some people had some speeches, and then we went and walked into the street. We blocked the street and then we went and just marched around I guess.

Alice: We went to DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) and we kept saying chants and songs. DEQ is where they check for clean water and they weren't doing their job.

Clara: We surrounded the building with caution tape.

Jonah: And we blocked the doors.

A: And people maybe got arrested. (Editor's note: after we left, 29 people were arrested for blocking entrances at the DEQ.)

Why were we there?

A: Because we were fighting for justice and clean water and a bunch of other things. And we were fighting for people to get their water back and no lead in the water.

C: We were there to try to get the message out that there are places with no clean water, and they need clean water because they can't drink out of their taps. People were contacting people in the DEQ, but nothing was happening so we decided to TAKE ACTION! (Leah: Rawrrrr!)

J: We wanted to make sure that everybody is treated equally.

A: We kept shouting "DEQ! Do your job!" because they weren't doing their job.



“It was one thing to know that you didn't have water and you couldn't afford your water. It's a whole other thing to find out they shut off your entire community's water and none of you matter.”

—Valerie Jean, mother of five, grandmother of two, and member of Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

You guys made signs. What did your signs say?

L: Since I like living things and wild things, I made a sign that said “Protect the Earth” because I really love the earth and all its nature.

A: Mine said “Protect the Lakes” because our water comes out of the lakes.

C: I wrote “Clean Water for Everyone”, because everyone needs water. It's not fair for the water to be poisoned and then have to pay for it.

J: My sign said “Fight Pollution Not People,” because there are too many wars going on and we need to stop pollution to make sure it isn't a worldwide problem.

What do you think that you want to do now that you are part of the Poor People's Campaign?

C: I want to do more things to give people clean water, and maybe do a fundraiser for the Poor People's Campaign.

J: I want to post something on Facebook to let people know what is going on with the water.

A: I want to see if you'll let me go to the Poor People's Campaign again.

L: I want to do a volunteer project to help nature.

C: I don't want to buy any more Nestle water bottles.



Peace House

321 Phelps Ave.
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 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

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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.

- ◆ Please consider bringing a snack to our summer program! We enjoy healthy snacks like fresh fruit, trail mix, crackers, cheese, granola bars, and popcorn (no nuts please). Contact us for more info on how to do this.
- ◆ Consider joining us for a field trip as a chaperone.
- ◆ We always need prizes (\$1–\$2) for our "prize box." These are small rewards that kids select after they have earned tickets through reading, math and positive behavior.
- ◆ 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 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!