

+ The Oklahoma City Catholic Worker +

Volume 14 # 1 + The world will be saved by Beauty. + February 2018

AN ALTERNATIVE STATE OF THE CITY MESSAGE: ON THE PERSECUTION OF THE POOR IN OKLAHOMA CITY.

Prepared by Bob Waldrop, Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House

In January, Mayor Mick Cornett delivered his annual "State of the City" speech, giving his "View from the Top Down" as to how Oklahoma City is doing. This alternative presentation is a "View from the Bottom Up."

BUILT ON FOUNDATIONS OF STOLEN PROPERTY. Oklahoma City is a place located on lands looted from the Creek (Muskogee) and Seminole peoples who were forcibly relocated here by the United States government in the 1820s. There may be nothing to be done about that at this late date, but forgetting our origins is a moral peril.

PERSECUTION OF THE POOR VIA THE MUNICIPAL COURTS.

Oklahoma City is a place where we make twice as much in fines and court fees as it costs us to operate our court system. Cash bail ensures poor people are held until trial. They are charged rent for being in jail, even if they are later found innocent or charges are dropped. This can be more than \$1200/month. If they do not pay, they are hunted down, arrested, and incarcerated in our debtors' prison – the County Jail. Our municipal courts do not always advise people coming before them of their rights to a hearing to determine their ability to pay fines and costs. This social darwinist approach of City government grows out of the attitudes of our dominant culture & its leadership class. We are deaf to the plea of the single mother of three children for mercy for a ticket & costs amounting to hundreds of dollars for some random non-violent "crime" that hardly deserves that classification.

PERSECUTION OF THE POOR VIA STRUCTURAL RACISM.

Oklahoma City is a place where, under the guise of "redevelopment," the City and State have used eminent domain to ruthlessly destroy entire neighborhoods, mostly peopled by persons and communities of color, scattering neighbors who have lived together for generations, and paying them cheap prices for their properties. Eminent domain is essential to the processes of structural racism that keep poor people poor.

The destruction of the Deep Deuce and the development of the Hospital/Innovation districts are textbook examples of structural racism at work. It's very clever how it happens. As Oklahoma City schools integrated, white people moved to Edmond. A freeway connecting downtown OKC with Edmond was necessary to accommodate the white flighters. It jammed its way right through the Deep Deuce. But it's not accidental that so many African Americans lived in its path because that was the only part of town they were allowed to live in – by law – for decades. Obviously it was their fault that they were black. If they weren't black, they wouldn't have had to live in that neighborhood. Plausible deniability is all over the place then and now. We give an occasional quick wink and a nod to the sacrifices of people of color to benefit those in the dominant culture who disliked them so much they were moving to Edmond to keep their kids out of schools with them.

Later, the remaining Deep Deuce eminently domained properties were transferred via various sweetheart deals to wealthy and politically well connected developers (mostly white of course). The mostly black original owners – these are people driven out by court orders via a due processed white riot that destroyed their neighborhoods just as thoroughly as the Tulsa rioters did to the Greenwood neighborhood in 1921 – get nothing from the newly politicized value of their former properties. All the construction and economic activities in the Deep Deuce and the Innovation/Hospital districts grows from these foundations of land theft by government decree.

PERSECUTION OF THE POOR BY POLITICALLY FINAGLING RENTS.

This process destroyed more low income housing than was subsequently built so this eminently domained system of structural racism also raised rents for everyone. How convenient for the landlords and how inconvenient for the renters. I'm sure it's an accident that most landlords are white. It's hard to build family wealth, however, so you can become a landlord, when you are forced to sell your most valuable asset – your home – for a low non-market price, and then you have to buy new property at actual market prices. Oklahoma City has forced this upon some families as many as three times since the 1970s. This destroyed enormous amounts of family wealth and community cohesion for the sake of assorted pie-in-the-sky-white-people economic development gimerackery. This is not the mythical invisible hand of the marketplace at work. It is the foreseeable result of public policies enacted by the government of Oklahoma City which has always been controlled by white people.

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE OF THE POOR IS NEVER SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE OF THE RICH.

Oklahoma City is a place where we spend a billion dollars spiffing up downtown, fattening the wallets of well connected developers and construction companies with huge welfare checks from the taxpayers. But our advice to the poor is always, "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps." When three of the richest guys in the state showed up on the porch at City Hall with their plan to snatch the Seattle Sonics and make them the OKC Thunder, Mayor Cornett didn't say, "Great idea! I'll support you all the way as you bootstrap yourselves into this new endeavor." No, he did not say that. He most emphatically did not say that. He said: "Here's the city checkbook boys. How much do you want?" Oklahoma City is a place run for the profit of rent seeking economic aristocrats who loot the common good with their crony capitalistic schemes.

CLOSING THE COMMONS TO THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF THE POOR.

Oklahoma City is a place where the permitting process for a tabletop shop (a small table or stand on a sidewalk) is so byzantine we might as well say its illegal. Los Angeles has 50,000 tabletop shops which means 50,000 people are able to create a microenterprise living for themselves with low barriers to market entry. OKC will hand out any amount of money to politically well connected developers but the City can't provide an easy process to permit tabletop shops on sidewalks

and other public rights of way.

OKC HAS NO ROBUST BUS SERVICE. Oklahoma City is a place where there is no plan to finance and operate a robust bus system that gets people to work, shop, worship, & learn, potentially benefitting hundreds of thousands of people in central Oklahoma. Most of our jobs are not reasonably accessible via the bus. We have no Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, & Time Bound (SMART) Goals for the bus system. Instead, the City is spending FOUR TIMES the annual cost of our bus system to build a downtown streetcar to nowhere, & then we take \$3.5 million from the general fund for its operations. If there was \$3.5 million in surplus revenue this year, why no improvements in the bus system? The dominant culture's leadership class makes regular claims that there "will" be such a "robust" system, we should all "just be patient." In the absence of SMART goals for the bus system & a transparent, public plan with actual details, we can only conclude that there is no plan. Since there is no plan, the claim by political & transportation leaders that the bus system is a priority & will eventually become "robust" are neither believable nor credible.

PERSECUTING THE POOREST OF THE POOR BY LIMITATIONS ON SPEECH. Oklahoma City is a place where we persecute the poorest of the poor with egregious violations of their First Amendment right to beg for help in public. It's not enough that we set up situations of cascading sorrows that render people homeless. No, we must lock them up & levy fines and costs on them for begging the public for help. Then we callously & hypocritically claim that "this is for their own benefit."

PERSECUTION OF THE POOR WITH APATHY AND INDIFFERENCE.

Oklahoma City is a place with a glittery downtown & a wannabe sophisticated urban culture that functions as a Potemkin Village hiding the ugly realities of a City where 88% of the Oklahoma City Public Schools students are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Our willingness to let all of this evolve without insistently asking questions of morality & prudence speaks poorly of the character of the people of Oklahoma City & the political, economic, cultural, & religious organizations of its dominant culture. We have not held people accountable. We have turned our eyes away & ignored corruption. We have let the crony capitalists run amok at great cost to the common good. We are not taking decisive action now to secure justice, opportunity, and equity for all in this City.

HISTORICAL BLINDNESS, HYPOCRISY AND POPULAR ATTITUDES.

If this wasn't enough. . . and it obviously isn't. . . after all this history is studiously ignored by the dominant culture, its media, and its leadership class, and with the most enormous amount of hypocrisy possible, we say that their poverty is all their own fault and nobody else had anything to do with it. We say that so loudly and so often that people believe its true. That's very convenient for the richest & most politically powerful among us.

PERSECUTION OF THE POOR WITH NARCISSISTIC RADICAL SELFISH AUTONOMY. So it comes to pass, that Oklahoma City is a place where solidarity is an increasingly alien, foreign concept apparently not a major concern to the dominant culture and its leadership class – until the next tornado anyway. Then circumstances force us to do what we should do anyway. But now we think we can get by without it. If it were important, things would be different. But they aren't, so there you go.

CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL SINS AGAINST THE POOR. If we want Oklahoma City to become a better place, then each of us must endeavor to be a better people. This is especially important for the dominant culture and its leadership class, because that is where the majority of our problems arise. All of this public social evil, with such consequences for so many people, grows out of individual bad decisions of omission and commission. Some, of course, are more responsible and culpable than others. Of those, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, says, "And these will go off to eternal punishment.." *However pious the thought, it remains a cold comfort in the present situation.*

WISDOM OF ROMERO

Oscar Romero was the Archbishop of San Salvador in Central America. In 1980, his own government assassinated him while he was celebrating Mass because he defended the poor against those who attacked and killed them when they stood up for their rights.

THE VIOLENCE we preach is not the violence of the sword, the violence of hatred. It is the violence of love, of brotherhood, the violence that wills to beat weapons into sickles for work. Let us not forget: we are a pilgrim church, subject to misunderstanding, to persecution, but a church that walks serene because it bears the force of love.

We must learn this invitation of Christ: "Those who wish to come after me must renounce themselves." Let them renounce themselves, their comforts, their personal opinions, and follow only the mind of Christ, which can lead us to death but will surely also lead us to resurrection. The Christian must work to exclude sin & establish God's reign. To struggle for this is not communism. To struggle for this is not politics. It is that the gospel demands of today's Christian more commitment to history.

Our religion is life. This is a beautiful truth that I want to remind you of. I want to recall it to you with gratitude to God, because the preaching of religion as life is what has given resurrection & life to many who were dead in faith. It is worthwhile to believe, it is worthwhile to come to Mass on a Sunday & nourish oneself there on words of life, not because so-and-so says them, but because they are of Christ, the living one beyond comparison.

A Christian community is evangelized in order to evangelize. A light is lit in order to give light. A candle is not lit to be put under a bushel, said Christ. It is lit and put up high in order to give light. That is what a true community is like.

THE WORKS OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE OSCAR ROMERO CATHOLIC WORKER

+LIVE simply and justly in solidarity with the poor and marginalized and be a good neighbor. Make no war on them, rather, be one with them in spirit, truth, and love. **+HEAR** the truth when it is spoken to you. Discern the signs of the times and speak truth – to power, to the people, and to the Church. **+MAKE** injustice visible – witness, remember, teach, proclaim, tell. Light candles, do not curse the darkness. **+PROTECT** the poor and powerless – listen, learn, educate, organize, empower participation, and respect life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. **+WORK** for reconciliation with truth, evangelism, catechesis, orthopraxis. **+CELEBRATE** life, goodness, beauty, virtue, responsibility, and joy. Practice peace, non-violence, servant leadership, harmony, community, voluntary cooperation, and the proper stewardship of God's creation. Pray without ceasing. **+ENSURE** fair distribution, subsidiarity, economic opportunity, justice, and food security for everyone everywhere.

The **Oklahoma City Catholic Worker** is published irregularly by the Oscar Romero Catholic Worker community, 1524 NW 21, OKC OK 73106. Each month we deliver food to about 400+ households who don't have transportation. We invite folks to help on the 3rd and 4th Saturdays of the month, meeting at 9 am (8 am in the summer) at the Dorothy Day Center, 4909 N State, OKC. Nov & Dec have different delivery schedules each year.

Help line to request a food delivery: 405-557-0436.
Other calls 405-200-8155. Email robert@justpeace.org.

Visit us online at
**www.justpeace.org + www.bettertimesinfo.org +
www.energyconservationinfo.org + www.bobwaldrop.net +
www.ipermie.net + www.facebook.com/oscarromerocatholicworker**

+Blessed Stanley Rother Prayer for the Common Good

O God, Who by the preaching and teaching of the Blessed Stanley Rother has given us an example of fortitude in the face of injustice & political corruption, grant that we who reverence his life & ministry may also imitate his example of fidelity to wisdom, truth, life, justice, & beauty, so that we may order our lives and actions in accordance with those truths and thereby fulfill our responsibilities as Christians to protect the common good. Inspire us to create movements of social justice that enhance the common good and thus we will honor his memory. We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Prayer to the Martyr-Bishop the Blessed Oscar Romero of El Salvador for Social Justice

+ Blessed Romero, During a time of grave evil you spoke with courage to rebuke the powerful, pleading with them to cease their violence, and repent of their murders. You called upon the rich to end their greed, to embrace just economic systems, and to relinquish their power. In solidarity you comforted the poor, gave them hope and strength, and witnessed the crimes against them, always speaking truth, justice, mercy, and love.

Teach us to understand our complicity with the sins of empire. Help us end our support for the structures of sin that bring violence and injustice into the world. Be our guide as we build structures of justice, mercy, love, and beauty.

O God, who by the preaching and teaching of Oscar Romero has given us an example of love and fortitude in the face of violence and greed, grant that we who reverence his life and ministry may also imitate his fidelity to truth, justice, and peace. Soon come the promise of Mary, that all tyrants will be cast down, the proud scattered, the lowly exalted, and the hungry filled with good things. through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Corporal Works of Mercy for the Natural Creation

+ GROW! Food not lawns! Even one tomato plant or a few herbs helps. Plant trees for food and shade!

+ BE FRUGAL! Drive less, walk & go public transit more. Stop wasting water. Invest in energy conservation in your dwelling. Dry clothes with sun & wind on a clothes line. Travel between cities by bus and train.

+ PROTECT EARTH'S ECOLOGIES! Leave a place for our fellow creatures, flora and fauna! Feed the birds! Bell the outdoor cat.

+ SUPPORT LOCAL AND JUST ECONOMIES! Buy local from farmers, shops, restaurants. Always buy fair trade coffee, chocolate, and other internationally sourced items. End your support of sweatshop labor. Every dollar you spend is a vote. Never vote for evil with your money.

+ CLEAN UP! Don't use noxious herbicides/pesticides that poison the environment & kill pollinators. Don't pour noxious chemicals into your drains. Pick up trash in public places. Avoid plastic like the plague that it is.

+ GET WITH NATURAL LAW! Stop wrapping organic materials in black plastic & burying them in the ground! That's NOT natural! Compost food scraps & lawn waste. That's the way God does it! (When it comes to organic waste, you don't really think you are smarter than God, do you? Hmmm. . .)

+ WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND! Reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, make it over, make do, do without. Shop the after-market at thrift stores & flea markets first.

How to grow some food – square foot gardening, composting (because a rind is a terrible thing to waste), easy perennials for food!
<http://www.bettertimesinfo.org/26gardening.htm>

Faux Fried “Not-Rice”

A low carb take on a traditional Asian comfort food!

Ingredients: 1 whole head of Cauliflower, 1 medium onion, garlic, carrots, celery, mushrooms, sesame oil, soy sauce, red wine or cooking sherry, chopped ham or hamburger (if this is a main dish). Add any other vegetables that you like. Leave out the meat for a side dish or meatless main dish for a Friday in Lent.

Chop one onion into small pieces. Shred three medium carrots. Chop the mushrooms. Chop 3 ribs of celery into small pieces. Mince a half dozen cloves of garlic. Put all the vegetables (except for the cauliflower) and your meat into a heavy skillet with enough sesame oil to saute. (If you have a wok, use that.) Saute until the onions start to clear and the meat is cooked (if you are using meat). Meanwhile, shred your head of cauliflower. Add the shredded cauliflower to the mixed vegetables. Add some soy sauce and wine or cooking sherry to taste. Cook, stirring frequently, until the cauliflower is done but not mushy (about 5 minutes).

+ A Modern Prayer for the Ember Days

We keep the traditional Ember Days on the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following Ash Wednesday, Holy Cross (Sept 14), St Lucy (Dec 13), and Pentecost. On these days we fast and pray to learn moderation in the use of the goods of the Earth. We call ourselves and all people to repent of sins against Creation, to help the poor, work for justice, and to anticipate the coming Reign of Justice with penitential works of justice, peace, and the care of Creation.

+ In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **COME AND BE WITH US, FATHER AND CREATOR**, as we dwell here in our Common Home, journeying together with all of your creations towards your reign of peace and justice. We give you thanks and praise for the beauty and generosity of the natural Creation which nourishes all creatures and witnesses to your glory. We pray for abundant harvests and solidarity with the poor, so that no one will lack what is necessary for life.

COME AND BE WITH US, CHRIST JESUS REDEEMER, in this time of grave need and peril.

All Creation is under assault by evil! Everywhere there is burning, plundering, smashing, destroying, polluting and killing. Apocalypse strides with impunity across our Common Home. We take from the poor so we can give to the rich, and turn away from our duty of solidarity. We kill with wars and fill the roads and seas with refugees. We abuse your free gifts of Creation with selfishness, greed, and lust. Forgive us for our actions and ideologies which create structures of sin that call forth and empower these terrible crises. Bring us to reconciliation and peace with ourselves, our neighbors, and with all Creation.

COME AND BE WITH US, HOLY SPIRIT SUSTAINER, who comforts and heals. Teach us to do works of mercy, justice, peace, healing, and solidarity. Lead us in journeys of protection and rescue for all who are at risk of hate, violence, war, and disaster. Give us strength to reform our ways and manners of living so that we bless and nurture all Creation. Open our eyes, ears, minds, and hearts so that we see, hear, and understand all that is. Guide us towards a way of life that cares for people, cares for Creation, and has a care for the future. Call forth leaders of spiritual and temporal vision and action, to guide us on our journeys. In flame the hearts of those being called so that they hear your guidance and understand its meaning. Help us turn our backs on the false prophets who lead us in paths of destruction, hate, waste, and violence. These things we pray for, invoking the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Michael and all the Archangels, St. Kateri Tekawitha, St. Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, and Saints Isidore and Maria, in Jesus' holy Name, Amen.

The Adoration of Julian of Norwich

Be a gardener. Dig a ditch, work and sweat, and turn the earth upside down and seek the deepness and water the plants in time. Continue this labor and make sweet floods to run and noble and abundant fruits to spring. Take this food and drink and carry it to God as your true worship.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF SORROWS FOR THOSE WHO WILL DIE TODAY IN WAR.

Our Lady of Sorrows, Today, across the world, violence and war rage. Many are helpless and without defense or refuge before forces stronger than they. So we pray, and ask you, Our Mother, to pray, for those who will die today because of war, economic chaos, injustice, and exploitation, especially the children. Prepare them for the agony, despair, and terror of the violence that is upon them. Comfort them and hold them close to the bosom of thy Wounded Heart as they drink deeply of the bitter cup which is forced upon them. Wipe their tears, calm their fears, welcome them to peace and safety. Eternal rest grant to them, & may perpetual light shine upon them.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Pray for us that we will do what needs to be done with peace and justice, wisdom and beauty, to overturn the thrones of tyranny and scatter the unjust, to cast down the bloody rulers who make the cry of the widow and orphan rise to heaven, to raise up the lowly and strengthen the weak. Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to the Gospel of your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Prayer of Flannery O'Connor to the Archangel Raphael

Raphael, lead us toward those we are waiting for, those who are waiting for us: Raphael, Angel of happy meeting, lead us by the hand toward those we are looking for. May all our movements be guided by your Light and transfigured with your joy. Angel, guide of Tobias, lay the request we now address to you at the feet of Him on whose unveiled Face you are privileged to gaze. Lonely and tired, crushed by the separations and sorrows of life, we feel the need of calling you and of pleading for the protection of your wings, so that we may not be as strangers in the province of joy, all ignorant of the concerns of our country. Remember the weak, you who are strong, you whose home lies beyond the region of thunder, in a land that is always peaceful, always serene and bright with the resplendent glory of God.

Spiritual Works of Mercy for the Natural Creation

+ COMMIT! Accept personal responsibility to live your life so that your love for God manifests as you care for people, care for Creation, & have a care for the future.

+ HOPE! Nurture blessings in your life & in the lives of others. Celebrate life, goodness, beauty, virtue, joy, responsibility, & wisdom. Don't leave anyone behind for the wolves to devour. Pray without ceasing.

+ PLACE MATTERS! Work with your neighbors to heal & regenerate the natural environment & to increase the safety, security, health, & well-being of your neighborhood.

+ OBSERVE! JUDGE! ACT! See all that can be seen! Always look for the big picture, the holistic vision. Judge the signs of the times with care and prudence. Act with love, persistence, and fortitude. Procrastination is the thief of time and the destroyer of possibilities.

+ GET INVOLVED! Support public & private initiatives that promote water conservation, renewable energy, local food systems, tree planting, organic gardening & farming, public/community transportation, free range & pastured flocks & herds, energy conservation, urban agriculture, & community capacities for food & economic security.

+ WALK YOUR TALK! What you do with your life matters – to you, to those who care for you, & to your God & all Creation. Your works of love, beauty, & the care of Creation, when joined with those of others across the planet, will ultimately free peoples from oppression, make justice possible, end tyranny, halt genocide, & restore & renew ecological systems. This authenticity of life & action is a source of wisdom & peace. All the way to heaven is heaven! Believe it & act on it and have no regrets!

+ REGENERATE! RENEW! REPRODUCE! RESIST! Build new sustainable structures in the midst of the collapsing ruins of the old. Be fruitful and multiply blessings, justice, wisdom, peace, prudence, and joy for all. Oppose all people, systems, & the demons who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls, who do not care for people, do not care for Creation, & do not have a care for the future. Make injustice & evil visible! Raise up your children showing them the journey of mercy for Creation and all people. Never forget that we are in this for the long haul. Plan and act accordingly.

A 11 x 17 poster of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy for Creation may be downloaded from <http://www.justpeace.org/mercy4creation.pdf>.

8-1/2 x 11 posters of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy may be downloaded from <http://www.justpeace.org/corporal4creation.pdf>
<http://www.justpeace.org/spiritual4creation.pdf>
These may be freely reproduced and distributed.

With Christ's light let us illuminate even the most hideous caverns of the human person: torture, jail, plunder, want, chronic illness. The oppressed must be saved, not with a revolutionary salvation, in merely human fashion, but with the holy revolution of the Son of Man, who dies on the cross to cleanse God's image, which is soiled in today's humanity, a humanity so enslaved, so selfish, so sinful. *Blessed Oscar Romero of El Salvador.*