Where are the Saints To Change the Social Order?

“Where are the saints to change the social order, not just to minister to the slaves but to do away with slavery”, asks Dorothy Day, cofounder of the Catholic Worker Movement. While many catholic workers, including Dorothy Day, never thought of themselves as saints, they did, however, strive to change the social order; the status quo. Many gave their very lives to the struggle.

The catholic workers of Hildegard House see the horrors of a society built on exploitation and we yearn to change it. We know that whatever we do, we will do it out of a prayer and out of a faith and belief that we are guided by the Spirit. We will do it out of community. We will do it out of love. We are committed to non-violence, but that does not mean that we will passively sit by and watch others be violated or exploited. We will walk with those who have experienced de-humanizing and destructive forces, not in pity, but in compassion and comradery because we know that an injustice done to one of us is done to us all.

In these coming months, Hildegard House Catholic Worker Community is committed to offering spiritual, social, and logistical support to the Phoenix Rising Group. This group of survivors of sexual exploitation will hold peer support meetings and host events that will help them to heal themselves and each other, as well as reach out to those still trapped in the sex-slave industries.

The Phoenix Rising and Hildegard House communities are exploring working in conjunction with 2 national anti-trafficking organizations. Treasures Ministries founded in 2003, is a faith-based survivor-led outreach and support group for women in the sex industry. Their mission is to reach, restore and equip women in the sex industry and victims of trafficking to live healthy, flourishing lives and train others to do the same across the globe. Members of the Phoenix Rising and the Hildegard House are making plans to attend a 2 day Treasures Outreach and Care Training for survivors and supporters to reach out to women who are commercially exploited, particularly in strip clubs.

World Without Exploitation was created to confront the question of why, during a time of great social, economic, and political progress are so many people purchased like products. This organization has made advocating for policies that reduce the demand side of trafficking front and center. World Without Exploitation is committed to looking deep into the root causes of trafficking and exploitation and see them as human rights issues which are fueled by gender, racial and economic inequalities. This organization offers many ways for people to become involved from signing their pledge, to advocating for policy change, to becoming educated and speaking truth to power.

Hildegard House is not single-issue focused. We understand that exploitation is part and parcel of a system that is financed by unchecked capitalism that feeds our empire. We are beginning to see the empire crumble. Eventually, we will have to replace it. Hopefully, we will lay a good and just foundation or we could find ourselves with something worse than we already have. The will to live is pushing up and out from under the rubble carrying with it the universal truths that can help us create good and just communities with all the beauty and strength of diversity. And with that thought in mind, we hope that we will be some of the people who will change the social order.
CLARIFICATION OF THOUGHT

“We need round-table discussions to keep trained minds from becoming academic. We need round-table discussions to keep untrained minds from becoming superficial. We need round-table discussions to learn from scholars how things would be, if they were as they should be. We need round-table discussions to learn from scholars how a path can be made from things as they are to things as they should be.”
Maurin, Peter. Quoted by Day, Dorothy. "Loaves and Fishes", The Catholic Worker, May 1967, 5,6

Second Sunday of the months of October 2017—May, 2018, 3-4:30PM (Except December). Free and open to the public. At Hildegard House. Call for more details, 722-2231

October 8—World Without Exploitation

November 12—Addressing the Demand Side of Trafficking

December—No clarification of thought this month

January 14—Democratic Socialists of America

February 11—Political and Social Justice Art

March 11—Prayer, Resistance and the Pipeline

April 8—Treasures Ministries and the Sex Industries  Note the time change for this roundtable. 6:30–8PM

May 6,(please note date change due to Mothers Day) - Topic to be announced on our facebook page.

Hildegard House Catholic Worker will be hosting the 2018 Midwest CW Faith and Resistance Retreat in partnership with Camp Makwa –Line 3 Frontline Camp. This will take place in April, 2018. The details are still in the works but we will be updating through the National Catholic Worker Listserve via Frank Cordaro. Watch for details.

Phoenix Rising Events. Open to survivors and allies.

Email: 4survivorsbysurvivors@gmail.com for more details.

Peer support group. For survivors only.— 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month.

Spa night—First Monday of the month

Movie and Popcorn night—2nd Wednesday of the month

Baking night—3rd Monday of the month

Craft and card making night—3rd Wednesday of the month

Game night—4th Tuesday of the month
Growing Food in Duluth, MN

Michele Naar-Obed

My family and I moved to Duluth in 2002. Having come from a climate that had a good 9 month growing season, it took me a while to learn how to grow anything more than rhubarb which flourishes up here in the Northland. I have come to know the weather patterns and the soil quality a bit better over these years and I’ve learned about the different places that one can grow and harvest food in the city.

The Hildegard House has a very small amount of green space around it and we are trying to optimize it. We now have 2 apple and 1 cherry trees planted along the sidewalk. We have mint and blueberry bushes along the steps from the sidewalk to the front door. We have thimbleberries on the little grassy hill and we have hopes to get currants. Along the side of the house hugging the alley, we have a raised bed which produced an excellent garlic yield this year. We are also able to rent a good sized plot of land through the community garden program that is only a few blocks from the house.

We have friends with greenhouses and grow lights, so even in Duluth one can grow tomatoes. This is good news for an Italian gardener.

Growing food is much more than a hobby. In this time when more and more of our food is being poisoned by big corporate agriculture, it is becoming a survival skill.
Hildegard House 2nd Annual Lantern Launch

The Hildegard House hosted its 2nd annual lantern launch on September 9. The event was attended by more than 40 survivors, friends, allies, and supporters. It was our intention to let our sisters and brothers who are still trapped in the sex slave industries know that they are not alone, that they are loved and they are valued. Launching candle-lit paper lanterns into the Lake Superior Harbor was a tangible way to send a message of our support. We chose to do this in the harbor because our community is very aware that women have been trafficked on the boats that come and go from there. The Canal Park area hosts businesses that cater to the sex industry. We hope to see an end to this exploitation in our city. Here are some photos of the event and the lyrics to the song that was played while the lanterns were launched.

SOUND OF SURVIVING
Nichole Nordeman

They told me  But my story is only now
I'd never get to tell my  beginning
story
Too many bullet holes  Don't try to write my
It would take a miracle  ending
These voices  Nobody gets to sing my
Inside my head like poison  song
Trying to steal my hope
Silencing my soul

This is the sound of surviving
This is my farewell to fear
This is my whole heart deciding
I’m still here, I’m still here
And I’m not done fighting
This is the sound of surviving

These pieces
The ones that left me bleeding
Intended for my pain
Became the gift
You gave me
I gathered those pieces into a mountain
My freedom is in view
I’m stronger than I knew
And this hill is not the one I die on
I'm going to lift my eyes and
I'm going to keep on climbing

This is the sound of surviving
This is my farewell to fear
This is my whole heart deciding
I'm still here, I'm still here

And I'm not done fighting
This is the sound of surviving

I'm still here
Say it to the ache, lying there awake
Say it to your tears
I'm still here
Say it to the pain, say it to the rain
Say it to your fear

This is the sound of surviving
This is my farewell to fear
This is my whole heart deciding
I'm still here, I'm still here
And I'm not done fighting
No, I'm not done fighting
And I am still rising, rising
I'm still rising
And I'm not done fighting
This is the sound of surviving
The Hildegard House Catholic Worker hosted 2 water protectors from the Des Moines IA Catholic Worker, Jessica Reznicek and Ruby Montoya, who took bold actions with intent to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. We asked them to share their process that led them to do what they did.

We in Minnesota are facing off with the development of the Enbridge Energy pipeline which will ship tar sands oil from Canada to the oil refineries in Superior WI. Many are busily and prayerfully building a local resistance movement.

Some may be asking what this has to do with Hildegard House. We are aware that the whole fossil fuel industry is a dirty business. From the exploitation of our natural resources, to the rape and destruction of our earth, to the human trafficking pipeline that has developed from Minnesota to the man camps in the oil fields of the Dakotas, we cannot be silent.

The action that our 2 friends took has been controversial amongst the Catholic Worker Movement. Is it non-violent or violent? Can they justify their means? Do we stand with them or not?

This is their statement:

TWO WOMEN CLAIM RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAPL FIRES AND VALVE DESTRUCTION

The Dakota Access Pipeline is an issue that affects this entire nation and the people that are subject to its rule. With DAPL we have seen incredible issues regarding the rule of law, indigenous sovereignty, land seizures, state sanctioned brutality, as well as corporate protections and pardons for their wrongdoings. To all those that continue to be subjected to the government's injustices, we humbly stand with you, and we ask now that you stand with us.

Federal courts gave corporations permission to lie and withhold information from the public resulting in a complete media blackout. So, after recently being called by the Intercept, an independent media outlet, regarding illegal surveillance by the Dakota Access Pipeline and their goons, we viewed this as an opportunity to encourage public discourse surrounding nonviolent direct action as well as exposing the inadequacies of the government and the corporations they protect.

After having explored and exhausted all avenues of process, including attending public commentary hearings, gathering signatures for valid requests for Environmental Impact Statements, participating in civil disobedience, hunger strikes, marches and rallies, boycotts and encampments, we saw the clear deficiencies of our government to hear the people's demands.

Instead, the courts and public officials allowed these corporations to steal permissions from landowners and brutalize the land, water, and people. Our conclusion is that the system is broken and it is up to us as individuals to take peaceful action and remedy it, and this we did, out of necessity.

We acted for our children and the world that they are inheriting is unfit. There are over five major bodies of water here in Iowa, and none of them are clean because of corporation's flagrant irresponsibility, and now another wishes to poison literally millions of us irrepairably by putting us all at risk of another major catastrophe with yet another oil spill. DAPL has already leaked, and it will continue do so until the oil is shut off and the pipes are removed from the ground.

On election night 2016, we began our peaceful direct action campaign to a Dakota Access construction site and burned at least 5 pieces of heavy machinery in Buena Vista County, IA. Details regarding this action are attached to this statement below. This was information which was not shared with the public. We recognize that our action wasn't much, but we at least stopped construction for a day at that particular site.

We then began to research the tools necessary to pierce through 5/8 inch steel pipe, the material used for this pipeline. In March we began to apply this self-gathered information. We began in Mahaska County, IA, using oxy-acetylene cutting torches to pierce through exposed, empty steel valves, successfully delaying completion of the pipeline for weeks. After the success of this peaceful action, we began to use this tactic up and down the pipeline, throughout Iowa (and a part of South Dakota), moving from valve to valve until running out of supplies, and continuing to stop the completion of this project. More information on these actions is followed at the end of this statement.

These actions of great public interest were hardly reported and the federal government and Energy Transfer Partners colluded together to lie and withhold vital information from the public.

We then returned to arson as a tactic. Using tires and gasoline-soaked rags we burned multiple valve sites, their electrical units, as well as additional heavy equipment located on DAPL easements throughout Iowa, further halting construction.
Later, in the first week of May we attempted yet again to pierce a valve located in Wapello County, IA with an oxy-acetylene cutting torch. It was at this time we discovered oil was flowing through the pipe. This was beyond disheartening to us, as well as to the nation at large. This event was again hidden from the public and replaced with lies about "ditch depressions".

We stand here now today as witnesses of peaceful, nonviolent direct action. Our actions have been those of necessity and humility. We feel we have done nothing to be ashamed of. For some reason the courts and ruling government value corporate property and profit over our inherent human rights to clean water and land.

We are speaking publicly to empower others to act boldly, with purity of heart, to dismantle the infrastructures which deny us our rights to water, land and liberty. We as civilians have seen the repeated failures of the government and it is our duty to act with responsibility and integrity, risking our own liberty for the sovereignty of us all.

Some may view these actions as violent, but be not mistaken. We acted from our hearts and never threatened human life nor personal property. What we did do was fight a private corporation that has run rampant across our country seizing land and polluting our nation's water supply. You may not agree with our tactics, but you can clearly see the necessity of them in light of the broken federal government and the corporations they protect.

We do not anticipate a fair trial but do expect our loved ones to undergo harassment from the federal government and the corporations they protect. We urge you to not speak one word to the federal government and stand firm in order to not be oppressed further into making false, but self-incriminating statements. Film these interactions. There are resources as to what to do if the federal agents appear at your doorstep; educate and protect yourself. It is unfortunate to have to prepare for such things, but this is the government that rules, which continues to look upon the machines obsolete. One canister did not light, and that is unfortunate, but five out of six ain't bad.

As we saw construction continue, we realized that the pipe was going into the ground and that our only means to obstruct further corporate desecration was somehow to pierce through the empty steel pipes exposed at the numerous valve sites. We learned that a welding torch using oxygen and acetylene was the proper tool. We bought the equipment outside of our city in efforts to maintain anonymity as our goal was to push this corporation beyond their means to eventually abandon the project. We bought kits at Home Depot and the tanks at welding supply stores, like Praxair and Mathesons. Having no experience with welding equipment before, we learned through our own volition and we were able to get the job down to 7 minutes.

In our particular circumstances, we learned that scouting often hindered our ability to act in windows of opportunity. So, we went with our torches and protective gear on, and found numerous sites, feeling out the "vibe" of each situation, and deciding to act then and there, often in broad daylight. Trust your spirit, trust the signs.

Having run out of supplies (the tanks) we decided to return to arson because every action counts. We used gasoline and rags along with tires (as tires burn a nice while, once a steady fire within them burns) to multiple DAPL sites and equipment to be delayed.

We were able to get more supplies shortly after and returned to a valve site in Wapello County to act again. It was then we discovered that oil was flowing through the pipeline. This was not reported to the public, instead a story of "ditch depressions" was reported to the public in Wapello County as the reason to why the pipeline continued to be delayed.

It is because of these lies we choose to come out publicly, to set the record straight, and be open about these peaceful and viable tactics against corporate atrocities.

If there are any regrets, it is that we did not act enough. Please support and stand with us in this journey because we all need this pipeline stopped.

Water is Life, oil is death.

Jessica Reznicek and Ruby Montoya
In keeping with the Catholic Worker tradition of opening up ways in which many people can participate in the life of Hildegard House, we asked for 50 people to pledge $10 per month for one year. Thanks to a great response, we have made it through another year with ample electricity, heat, water, phone communication, house insurance and property taxes. That’s where the money goes and that’s why those pledges play a vital role in the life of Hildegard House. We are not a tax exempt organization because we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience, without need for governmental approval, regulation or reward. Your investment is leading to a much greater return, which is the breathing of life back into the spirit of all who walk through our doors. Please can we do it another year? Thank you to all those who have consistently made good on your pledges and if you haven’t made a pledge yet, we’d love to have you join in. Pledges can be made in monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or a one-time payment.

Contact: hildegardhouseduluthcw@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook: Hildegard House Catholic Worker. For Phoenix Rising: 4survivorsbysurvivors@gmail.com. If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive our newsletters or notification of events, please email or send us your postal address

Who are we: Rachel Gusman, Laura Hoelter, Treasure Jenkins, Greg and Michele Obed, Judy Sausen, Mary Kay Thornton, Sr. Linda Wiggins.