The Merchants Who Buy and Sell Human Rights

By Carol Denney

The hearing on Berkeley’s new anti-homeless ordinances was finally bootied over to another day at 1:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 1, when even a City Council majority couldn’t convince Mayor Tom Bates that it was perfectly okay to hold a public hearing in the middle of the night. City Councilmember Linda Maio, now the sole sponsor of the Downtown Berkeley Association’s (DBA) proposal for more anti-homeless laws, unveiled her latest unilateral changes to the proposal after midnight, at about 12:30 a.m. Her lengthy list of alterations was clearly an effort to deflect some of the criticism she’s weathered since the introduction of the original proposal on March 17.

The public and the other members of the council had never seen them before. Any discussion of her brand-new changes to the proposed ordinance would have sent the hearing, which Maio steadfastly insisted she still wanted to have that night, well into 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. The bleary-eyed but dedicated public — about a hundred strong — was still waiting for a chance to speak out even at that late hour.

City Councilmember Max Anderson declared, “I have no intention of participating in this charade,” calling the late-night sleight-of-hand a “backdoor rear-guard action designed to circumvent” the council’s vote in 2012 against a proposed anti-sitting law. “How low can you get,” Anderson observed, quickly noting the danger in not allowing a low bar before a council majority willing to go even lower. Councilmembers Kriss Worthington and Jesse Arreanguin objected as well. A council chamber overflowing into the street had weathered four public hearings already that night: budget hearings about cutting already starved nonprofits; lively SEIU union contract issues; issues regarding a delay of the second phase of the Tillman Mason report on discrimination; a hearing on the loss of a local neighborhood view; as well as an appeal of the refusal of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to landmark the iconic Campanile Way (which the council blandly rejected); and the fresh contracts of all the PBIDs, property-based business improvement districts which garnered some inspired opposition in the wake of the viral video of the DBA.

See City Council Delays Vote page 14

Blockading the ‘White Train of Death’

By Terry Messman

Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker, has been a lifelong source of inspiration for James and Shelley Douglass, both in their nonviolent resistance to war and nuclear weapons, and also in their solidarity with poor and homeless people. Day devoted her life to the works of mercy for the poorest of the poor, and often quoted Fyodor Dostoevsky on the high cost of living out the ideal of love in the real world. “As Dostoevsky said: ‘Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams.’”

The same warning might be given to those who try to live out the ideal of nonviolence in action, since love and nonviolence are essentially one and the same. One of Mohandas Gandhi’s descriptions of nonviolent resistance is “love-force.”

Although it may be heartening to read about nonviolence in the lives of Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Dorothy Day, it is a more “harsh and dreadful” proposition to engage in actual resistance to a nuclear submarine capable of destroying hundreds of cities, and protected by the most powerful government in the world.

Instead of nonviolence in dreams, one faces nonviolence in handcuffs and jail cells, nonviolence sailing in the path of massive submarines, nonviolence on the tracks blockading “the train out of hell.”

By the early 1980s, Jim and Shelley Douglass and the members of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action had created a highly visible campaign of resistance to the Trident nuclear submarine based at Bangor Naval Base near Seattle.

Then, in December 1981, the Trident campaign took on an entirely new dimension when a reporter warned Jim Douglass that he had observed a train north of Seattle that looked like it was “carrying big-time weapons.” The reporter added that the heavily armored, all-white train looked like “the train out of hell.” It wouldn’t be long before one newspaper would refer to it as the “Armageddon Express.”

After being alerted by the reporter, Jim went outside the house where he and Shelly lived next to the railroad tracks leading into the Bangor base, and saw the White Train coming down the tracks. He noticed that several cars had turrets where Department of Energy (DOE) guards could put guns through slits to defend the train.

The White Train became a new focus for Ground Zero’s resistance to nuclear weapons, as activists and train buffs discovered that the DOE utilized the train to ship nuclear weapons assembled at the Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas, to the Bangor Naval Base and other military sites.

After mapping out the train routes, Ground Zero made connections with people in more than 250 towns along the hundreds of miles of railroad tracks traveled by the White Train. Residents in these towns began holding vigils on the tracks as the White Train roared by, and many were arrested on the tracks for blocking the trains and their deadly cargo.

WHITE NIGHT OF EXTINCTION

The White Train campaign became such a significant protest movement that it was featured in People magazine in May 1984. Not only was David Van Biema’s report surprisingly meaningful and largely sympathetic to the anti-nuclear movement, the headline was stirring: “Radical Catholic Jim Douglass Fights a Grass-Roots War Against a Train Full of Nuclear Weapons.”

For those who have never seen the gigantic Trident submarine, or witnessed the unsettling arrival of the White Train, Douglass gave an evocative description of the nuclear train as I’ve ever heard.

“It was an awesome sight,” he said. “You feel the reality of an inconceivable kind of destruction. Anybody who sees this train experiences the evil of nuclear arms, because it looks like what it is carrying — a white night.”

The article in People captured the
Berkeley Police Justify Attack on Black Lives Matter

More weapons, more surveillance, and even helicopters are requested in the police report. Police wish to continue militarizing police departments, as well as defending the violent response to the Black Lives Matter movement— as though legitimate protest in our society does not exist.

by Carol Denney

The most interesting thing about the police report on the protests held in Berkeley last December is what’s not in it. There’s no mention of the fact that it was a Black Lives Matter protest, part of the nationwide concern over disproportionate black arrests, incapacitations and shooting deaths. The Berkeley police apparently considered this context irrele vant. Black Lives Matter as a movement is not mentioned at all. It isn’t in the glossary. It isn’t in the appendix.

Everything about the “Response to Civil Unrest” report seems to fall like a shadow from that towering omission. Without the gravity of the national, even federal, recognition of systemic civil rights violations pervasive in law enforcement, housing, education and employment polici es, the specter of colour elsewhere in the streets marching together to pressure for political change are viewed as nothing more than a ror on the move.

The dispersal orders in December’s Black Lives Matter marches had their dignity, their rights, and the deep history of the racism they were addressing set aside once the police saw evidence, emphasized in their report, that agitators might join the march as well. The report includes copycat flings and blame for the “fight like hell” and images of vandalism which had no connection to Black Lives Matter as an organization.

The following passage is from “Response to Civil Unrest Police Report” by the Berkeley Police Post Incident Review Team about the protests in Berkeley on December 6 and 7, 2014.

“On 12/01/14, the Berkeley Police Department received information from various sources that a march was scheduled to take place on 12/01/14 in Berkeley. The march was advertised as a ‘From Ferguson to Aistzinca March — March Against State Violence — Remember the Dead.’ Organizers urged attendees to ‘Fight like hell,’ ‘Bring masks’ and reminded the public of previous mass uprisings against the state. People who attended the event for a show a picture of a man sitting on an overturned police car. Oakland and San Francisco had just experienced ’Fack the Police’ (FTP) marches which resulted in mob violence, damage to businesses, looting, vandalism to vehicles, and attacks on officers.

Some will say that the police create this kind of agitation themselves. But longtime activists know that as possible this may be — and police repression has been parallel to success in ONCORE, an FBI program to infiltrate and discredit political movements — the Bay Area also has its own large basket of vandalism and worse. Cops who typically wear masks and hide behind a peaceful crowd, tactics which have confounded organizers of many different movements.

Most people acknowledge that the handful of people who turn a peaceful march into a hail of broken glass are a small but powerful minority of crowd. The Berkeley police report acknowledges this, and yet made a decision to call in mutual aid forces and prepare for a battle royale before the march had even begun, and commonly denied that as soon as things went south, everybody had to go home or take the consequences of baton strikes, tear gas, projectiles, and flash grenades. The Berkeley Police Department described why it called so many additional “police resources.”

“…The Department that determined the presence of unrest and likely high attendance, staffing resources above and beyond what BPD could field would be needed. BPD requested additional police resources from the Alameda County Office of Emergency Services. The County arranged for most mutual aidarrivée to arrive in Berkeley prior to the threat.

Ironically, this kind of preparation pre cludes the crowd management techniques which would have facilitated the march, as opposed to itself. …

…crowd management techniques were understaffed in favor of preparing to utilize resources for expected unrest.”

The demonstrators who marched to the police station the night of December 6 met with a skirmish line of officers prepared for war with the weapons of war. According to videos from the Internet that police supplied to accompany their report, the officers seemed to have some agitators of their own gratuitously shrugged and sending people in ways that inflamed tensions, and the report grudgingly acknowledges: “The event turned to violence and loot ing once police blocked the roadway at MLK and Addison St.”

Even reporters with press badges were knocked around. CS gas, moreover, is banned in warfare by the Organization for Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) under the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993. There is no “non lethal” weapon that hasn’t caused increasing concern regarding its injury or morbidity statistics.

But the decision to arm the police in this way was made long before the march began, long before any violence or vandal ism on the part of people in the street, as this report acknowledges.

“…in addition to these violent objects, much larger contingents of protesters refused to disperse and physically resisted law enforcement orders, choosing instead to tune their ground and confront officers. These protesters, by their sheer numbers, pre vented the police from addressing the most violent offenders through refusing to disperse, large groups of protesters, who may have considered themselves peaceful, protected, faciliated and enabled violent objects as they launched assaults on officers and non-violent community members within the crowd.”

The report neglects entirely to acknowled ge what hundreds of people did that night. The police gave dispersal orders to people trapped between skirmish lines with nowhere to go. The garbled, repeated announcements in an echoing urban setting filled with of news helicopters had the opposite of its intended effect as people came out of their homes and apartments and walked toward the noise to try to figure out what on earth was going on. The report states: “More than 23 dispersal orders were issued over 54 minutes using a loudspeaker beginning on Telegraph Ave. before officers took measures to disperse the crowd. The dispersal was read from a pre-prepared script… Rather than dispersing, the crowd size significantly increased as whole Telegraph Ave. and Durant Ave.”

We as a community can all just stay home, of course, until we can convince window-breakers not to smash windows. We can abandon our own civil rights, of course, if we all choose to do so. But we would be well advised, if we intend to travel the long, respected trajectory toward justice, to keep on walking forward. The Berkeley police report is the most interesting thing about their most interesting thing about the Black Lives Matter marches had their dig nity, their rights, and the deep history of the racism they were addressing set aside once the police saw evidence, emphasized in their report, that agitators might join the march as well. The report includes copycat flings and blame for the “fight like hell” and images of vandalism which had no connection to Black Lives Matter as an organization.

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Youth on the Street in Light of the Supreme Court Ruling

The Supreme Court recognized dignity in all human beings in June 26. Let us hope that governments everywhere will someday address the issues of poverty in the same spirit.

Commentary by Carol Denney

On Friday, June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court announced that LGBT couples have the right to marry in all 50 states. Households all over the nation celebrated, stiffened, or wondered what it means to their commu nity and to history.

In the Bay Area, the Pride celebrations honor an historical moment as the nation’s acceptance of lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and transgender (LGBT) community members deepens and strengthens at what was once considered an impossible pace.

Across the nation in small communi ties without an organized LGBT pres ence, LGBT as well as questioning indi viduals in hostile workplaces and family settings enjoy a small but powerful moment of support which might save lives.

The prejudice against LGBT individu als in deeply conservative states can be life-threatening. It is no accident that approximately 40 percent of the homeless less youth served by agencies identify as LGBT, according to a national report in 2012 by the Williams Institute, a think tank at the UCLA School of Law. And this number may be considered an under count because of the continued existence in some regions of severe stigma attached to being gay, or even responding as such to a survey.

Some young people, when they find and embrace their sexuality, find themselves rejected by their families, religious connections, workplaces, and communi ties. A disproportionate number end up on the streets. Nearly 70 percent of young people say that physical and sexual abuse as a child, neglect, and other violent crimes happening in their homes played a role in becoming homeless less, according to Safe Horizon.

It is worth keeping this fact in mind when one hears the hostility toward poor, homeless, and nomadic travelers sometimes fashionable in political and business circles. As hostile and dangerous as the streets can be, they can look like a more sensible alternative, even to a child, than a life of abuse.

The Supreme Court’s majority recog nized dignity in all human beings and the deep connections we all share on June 26. Let us hope that governing bodies everywhere will someday address issues of poverty in the same spirit.
New Hope for Vehicle Dwellers in California

“The ACLU stands behind the effort to decriminalize homelessness, as applied to the right to rest.” — Peter Gelbbum, Chair of ACLU of Santa Cruz County

by Steve Pleich

On June 1, 2015, the California Assembly voted 56-15 to approve AB 718 which “prohibits a city, county, or city and county from prohibiting or otherwise subjecting to civil or criminal penalties the act of sleeping or resting in a lawfully parked motor vehicle.”

The Homeless Persons Legal Advocacy Project (HPLAP) and the Santa Cruz Homeless Persons Advocacy Project (SC HPAP) support this legislation and believe that this is an opportunity to revisit practical options for safe and secure overnight parking. The ACLU of California and the Western Regional Advocacy Project are supporting this bill along with many other advocacy groups who support basic human rights for people experiencing homelessness.

The Safe Parking Project (SPP) is the ACLU’s effort to decriminalize homelessness, particularly as applied to the right to rest,” said Peter Connery, the vice president of Applied Survey Research.

Both the HPLAP and the SC HPAP believe that sleeping ordinances have no other legitimate purpose than to target people experiencing homelessness. In fact, punishing people who have no other form of shelter by ticketing, citing/arresting him or her, or impounding their vehicle has a disastrous effect on every person experiencing homelessness who rests in their vehicle.

Statistics, the number-one cause of homelessness is loss of employment. Often, the only way to keep the family unit together is to purchase a motor home or recreational vehicle to use as a primary residence. This situation is far more frequent than is commonly thought.

Vehicle sleepers — often women and children who do not feel safe out on the street or in women’s shelter because of the gender violence they have experienced — are particularly vulnerable. “Without that, we would not have had my independence. My RV gives me that asset they own,” said Ann, a longtime recreational vehicle dweller.

Moreover, increasing the number of people without shelter reduces public safety and increases other types of local costs. How can we provide the most basic of human rights and address the concerns of those who believe that public safety and order are imperiled by vehicle sleeping? Consider this if you will join us.

According to the 2013 Homeless Census and Survey, more than 3,500 people in Santa Cruz County are without shelter of any kind every night. Of those, 28 percent reside in recreational vehicles, vans or automobiles.

It is estimated that more than 200 to 300 recreational vehicles, vans and vehicles serve as the primary home for families. Many families see this option as the only way to keep the family together in the absence of affordable housing. Most of these vehicles are forced by circumstances to park overnight on city or county-owned property in commercial or industrial areas. Overnight parking would be from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. without exception. Registration fees for overnight stay would begin at 5:00 p.m. and extend to 5:45 p.m. Staff and security personnel would then review the overnight roster and set the night’s security procedures.

Under the proposal, volunteers or a nonprofit agency would manage the site. Garbage service and portable toilets would be provided at no cost to the city or county. Funding for the program would be obtained through private sources and administered by a recognized nonprofit agency. Volunteer staff would be on site at all times. The program would assume the cost of at least one private security officer to be on site one hour before regis- tration until one hour after all overnight guests have exited the site.

Legislative action would be a tremendous help but we need to start providing safe spaces for vehicle dwellers now. Safe overnight parking spaces are a pressing need for the ever-increasing number of vehiclelessly housed people experiencing homelessness. HPLAP and SC HPAP call upon everyone to lobby their State Senate representatives for the passage of AB 718 and to urge local elected officials to put realistic, practical options like the Safe Spaces Parking Program on the table.

Steve Pleich is an advocate for basic human rights for people experiencing homelessness. He is working with the Santa Cruz Safe Parking Project.

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An Anthem for the Homeless

by Steve Pleich

It’s a full-time job being homeless. It’s a full-time job being poor. That’s what those who say the homeless should just get out and get a job fail to understand.

You already have a job, and that job is surviving. You have to get in line early for food and even earlier for a place to sleep. You carry everything you own on your back and when your clothes wear out, you spend all your time searching for replacements.

You only have so much energy to expend because you have only so much food to fuel your body. Most of the time, you’re tired and you’re sore and your clothes are damp.

But sometimes at night, you recall who you once were.

You were a kid and played with other kids. You had a mother and a father. You wanted to be an engineer or a fire-fighter or an astronaut.

You were loved and loved in return. You were a family. And in your darkest imaginations, you knew that you could have seen yourself come to this place.

You are homeless. You are poor.

Steve Pleich is the Director of the Santa Cruz Homeless Persons Advocacy Project.
Anti-Homeless Laws Move People Along—and Push Them Further into Poverty

by TJ Johnston

I

n the span of one month, police in San Francisco have ordered at least 10 people to move from the sidewalk at least 10 times. The 75-year-old retired nurse—who asked that his last name not be used—called his most recent interaction occurred at 5 a.m. at the hands of the authorities.

“This morning I had just fallen asleep,” he said. “I set up my tent, got laid down, wrapped up and had fallen asleep until I heard a familiar tap. After tonight, the (police) said they would start citing anyone who slept on the sidewalk and (the Department of Public Works) have to wash the sidewalk.”

San Francisco has gained notoriety for its heavy reliance on police in responding to homelessness, and it takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 city ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors. According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School’s Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors.

The Coalition on Homelessness recommended that police prioritize serious crimes and quasi-crimes, with more than 22,000 of those citations given tickets for activities in public space. Additionally, peer researchers interviewed on video 43 people who described their experiences with law enforcement in detail. The study released its findings in a new report, “Prosecuting the Poorest: How San Francisco’s Policy of Criminalizing Public Space Repels Homeless,” in June.

A research team that the Coalition assembled, including currently and formerly homeless people, surveyed 351 homeless and marginally housed city residents. Additionally, peer researchers interviewed on video 43 people who described their experiences with law enforcement in detail. The study released its findings in a new report, “Prosecuting the Poorest: How San Francisco’s Policy of Criminalizing Public Space Repels Homeless,” in June.

According to the study, 70 percent of homeless people said that authorities asked them to move out of a public outdoor space, and nearly as many were given tickets for activities in public space. Also, 64 percent said they complied by moving, usually down the street.

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**Removal of Bus Shelter Harms East Oakland Residents**

by Lynda Carson

In early June, the much-needed bus shelter and passenger bench at the corner of East 18th Street and 3rd Avenue in Oakland was removed without advance notice to the passengers using the bus stop. Locals were shocked to suddenly find the bus shelter and bench removed.

Many of the residents of Redwood Gardens believe that the removal of the bus shelter and bench was carried out as a collective punishment against the community because historically people have been using the bus shelter to store their possessions.

The bus shelter and bench sat directly in front of 2951 Derby Street, a building near Walgreens and has been a greatly needed fixture over the past years because it protects passengers from the sun, rain and the otherwise brutal heat that blows across nearby Lake Merritt.

Many elderly and disabled persons in the community depend on the bus shelter and bench on a daily basis as a place to rest and keep their groceries safely out of the sun while waiting for the next bus. At least three different buses use the bus stop to collect passengers heading to different destinations, including the #18 bus used by wealthier people heading up into the hills, and the very overcrowded #14 bus that heads deeper into East Oakland. Many bus riders claim the #14 is the worst bus line operating in Oakland.

Locals disparagingly call the #14 “the ghetto bus” and claim that it is late most of the time, and is generally overcrowded because there are not enough buses operating on the line to support all the poor people who depend on the bus to reach their destination on a daily basis.

In comparison, at times during rush hour, the less crowded #18 bus going to wealthier areas of Oakland appears to be running twice as often at East 18th Street and 3rd Avenue compared to the overcrowded #14 bus used by poor people.

During the past few weeks, conversations with bus passengers, on at least one occasion the #14 bus was running late by an hour and a half. It was so crowded with people after a few stops busy stops near 11th Street and Broadway, that bus passengers were shouting and screaming that it was inhumane treatment, and difficult to breathe.

Passengers stated that it became nearly impossible for people to get on or off the bus, as more and more people tried to force their way onto the bus at each stop. According to sources, passengers were screaming to get off the bus and the bus driver kept screaming back at the passengers during that perilous ride.

Cheryl Saunders said, “I have often noticed that the buses going to wealthy areas of Oakland tend to run on time, run much more often and are much less crowded than the buses used by poorer people heading into East Oakland.”

Ben Fulcher, Sr. stated, “This is collectively punishment against the poor, elderly and disabled who need the bus shelters and other services.”

In response to my request for an interview, Clarence Johnson of media relations for AC Transit repeatedly said that AC Transit does not own the bus shelters and benches located at bus stops in Oakland.

The bus shelters and benches are all owned by Clear Channel Outdoor, and I do not know why the bus shelter and bench was removed,” Johnson said.

“However, shelters and benches historically have been removed when they are being abused. Sometimes churches will call us in to remove a bus shelter when drug dealers are using the shelters for illegal purposes. When people call to complain that flames are being thrown at the shelter, or that the shelter is being used for prostitution, we will send it to the police department and have the shelter and bench removed.”

You will have to contact Clear Channel Outdoor for more information.

Walden brings forth the idea of removing the much-needed bus shelter and bench because of a few bad actors is inhumane and amounts to collective punishment against the whole community. Johnson continued to defend the actions of Clear Channel Outdoor as being an acceptable practice. The shelters and benches may have on all the elderly and disabled bus passengers using the bus shelter.

I called Clear Channel Outdoor to ask someone about the sudden removal of the bus shelter and bench, and was connected to Selena Reynolds, who did not respond to my call. Reynolds handles real estate, including furniture and bus benches at bus stops in Oakland, according to the receptionist.

See Removal of Bus Shelter page 14
Y-M-C-A: A Column on Human Rights
by Carol Denney

On March 17, two key leaders of Berkeley’s YMCA — Executive Director Hae Won Rowh and Assistant Director of Berkeley’s YMCA, attended the City Council meeting. Chan spoke out for the proposed anti-homeless laws. Nobody knows yet what form the final legislation will take. Berkeley City Manager Christine Daniel just quit, and the reworked ordinances might not pass the council at all, although they seem to have the votes. But the Berkeley City Council is entitled to consider the YMCA’s pointed comments that evening as being in favor of new anti-homeless laws.

Chan identified himself as a YMCA employee, and in mentioning the 9,000 households served by the YMCA, he blamed the presence of homeless people on the YMCA as the reason why YMCA members are “frighting (sic)” of coming downtown.

“I want to talk to you about safety,” he stated, citing a violent incident which had occurred on the Post Office steps.

There is no need to criminalize already criminal behavior, so this example, like many of the examples offered by the handful in favor of the anti-homeless proposal, was an odd choice to use to promote more criminalization targeting homeless people and their belongings.

The anti-homeless law supporters that night who mentioned smoking, or violence, or threatening behavior need only call the police and report criminal behavior when they observe it.

But Mr. Chan is like a lot of business people in downtown Berkeley. It is easier to blame homeless and poor people than actually work in cooperative ways to reduce threatening and dangerous behavior — even behavior sometimes committed by YMCA staff and clientele.

“The YMCA, if it wishes to participate in a sublime interlude — as if they really despise their faces seem so sour as if they were a group except the homeless in his testimony to the City Council on March 17. He didn’t mention teenagers, or issues with their own membership. “Appropriate consequences” are an inappropriate way to describe criminalizing the attributes of homelessness in a town seemingly dedicated to having less low-income housing than the community needs. And “sanitation,” a respectable issue to be sure, is in no way addressed by criminalizing panhandling or blankets and bedding.

Criminalization of homelessness is costly, ineffective and inhumane. A majority of Berkeley voters know this, and voted down the City Council’s most recent effort to add an already embarrassing high pile of Berkeley anti-homeless laws, when they defeated an absurd anti-sitting law in 2012.

The Peace and Justice Commission, the ACLU, and Berkeley’s Homeless Task Force oppose the new laws, and odds are strong that a majority of YMCA members can be counted on to care deeply about resolving homelessness, not making homeless and poor people more miserable and burdened than they already are with bewildering restrictions with which it is impossible to comply.

But a Berkeley City Council majority led by Mayor Tom Bates and District 1 representative Linda Maio seems determined to be crowned the city with the most anti-homeless laws statewide.

The YMCA has so far refused to send a letter clarifying their stand on the new anti-homeless laws. YMCA President Fran Gallati and Executive Director Hae Won Rowh imply that they do not support an anti-sitting law in 2012.

The Berkeley City Council was treated to the very strong impression that not only the YMCA leadership, but the YMCA membership as well, supports new anti-homeless laws which, in fact, do nothing to improve public safety.

The YMCA lifeguard takes a “vape” break right by the Berkeley YMCA’s front entrance in violation of the city’s anti-smoking laws.

Carol Denney

The Berkeley City Council was treated to the very strong impression that not only the YMCA leadership, but the YMCA membership as well, supports new anti-homeless laws which, in fact, do nothing to improve public safety.

The YMCA, if it wishes to participate politically, is most welcome to do so. But right now it has put itself in a difficult posture. No one accidentally finds themselves speaking specifically to item 19 on the Berkeley City Council agenda on March 17. And if the YMCA spoke out in favor of anti-homeless legislation somehow by accident, its leaders should, as a matter of course and for the community’s sake, clarify their position.

On the Beach
by George Wynn

Out at the beach he rubs the sleep from his eyes
“The ones with the power they analyze us
we never really talk to us
and when they do in front of T.V. cameras
their faces seem so sour
as if down deep they really despise us.”

A Treasured CD
by Claire J. Baker

I’ve a restful CD —
slow harp melody
sprinkled with flute —
single notes and sweeping chords.
The gem begins and ends
with ocean waves and gulls.

I wish that a multitude of street people could hear this calming music,
in a sublime interlude
glide and soar for a while,
like gulls.
Arresting Hate Throughout Our Culture

This horrific attack targeted a church that has a long legacy in the struggle for African-American liberation and civil rights.

by the American Friends Service Committee

The killing of nine churchgoers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, cuts to the very core of our hopes for racial justice and a peaceful world.

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization that works to address the root causes of violence and oppression in communities worldwide, joins with all who are grieving in the wake of this purposeful act of mass violence.

The weight of this most recent tragedy presses down on us all, particularly on communities of color, where physical safety is far from guaranteed, even in a house of worship. This horrific attack targeted parishioners at a church that has a long legacy in the struggle for African-American liberation and civil rights.

Members of this church serve, as they have in the past, at the forefront of local and state politics and are strong advocates for racial justice. Mother Emanuel, as of this writing, seems to have been targeted as an attempt to terrorize people of color who participate in politics or advocate for rights and justice.

As the perpetrator of this mass murder has resulted in the arrest of a person, but not the problem. We will make no progress as a society if we believe that justice is done simply by punishing one individual white supremacist. Racism is not just a historic problem or the work of a few individual “bad apples.”

Racism — whether by direct intent or deeply entrenched structural factors — is a problem in all aspects of American life, including economics, housing, health care, criminal justice, policing, education, media coverage, among others.

We are living in a moment when many people in this country and abroad are seeing our nation’s addictions to racism and violence for what they are: social ills woven deeply into the tapestry of our society. This is a vital social challenge for all of us, and one that white people have particular responsibility to address. None of us will be truly secure until our systems are built to protect the well-being of all people.

In memory of the nine beautiful souls lost to the violence of a man propelled by racist philosophies and a culture of violence that our society as a whole is accountable for, each of us must recommit to ending these evils at their root.

Acknowledging the effects of generations of racism and violence on our current condition is a first step. Taking concrete actions to transform our society, institutions, and relationships to end racism and violence is the next.

While the beloved community where all are treated justly feels far off today, we must press forward now more than ever toward that necessary goal.

We have found several good resources that address systemic racism and white supremacist culture that help shed new light on this moment of tragedy. Here are a few we recommend for individuals and other faith and social groups to explore:

“Take Down the Confederate Flag” by Ta-Nehisi Coates on white supremacy culture and the Confederate flag (The Atlantic).

“Only white people can save themselves from racism and white supremacy” by Baynard Woods (Washington Post op-ed).

“Call it terrorism in Charleston” by Peter Bergen & David Sterman (CNN online).

“Schooled in disconnection: Waking up and struggling for social justice” by Lucy Duncan (Acting In Faith on AFSC blog).

Attend the White Privilege Conference, April 14-17, 2016, Philadelphia, PA.

Airbnb Aggravates Housing Crisis in Berkeley

by Carol Denney

They flagrantly violate the law. They don’t care about ordinances or regulations. They claim they have to ignore restrictions as a matter of necessity, because what else can they do?

No, we’re not talking about homeless people, or panhandlers, or itinerant wanderers hitchhiking up and down the coast. We’re talking about Berkeley home and apartment owners who have figured out that hitching a ride on Airbnb’s “sharing economy,” even if they’ll pour a few regulations over the kid’s old bedroom and the neighbors now living next to a swinging apartment that will bounce through various compliance mechanisms, but they should have cited our ordnance as a vague recommendation for regulation.

The typical Berkeley liberal would rather die than panhandle (a legal activity) but apparently has no issue with standing right in the middle of their million-dollar asset.

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People literally sleeping on the street cannot seem to move the hearts of City Council members, but cash-poor homeowners looking to monetize their million-dollar asset seem to have no trouble getting through.

At the televised council meeting acknowledging that they routinely break the law.

The short-term rental of an empty bedroom is presented as benign by “sharing economy” fans who enthuse about “disrupting” conventional business models and point to lucrative ride-sharing businesses like Uber as unstoppable, which might be the case in Berkeley.

Members of the Berkeley City Council might see the potential for a collision of interests between homeowners making money off the kids’ old bedroom and the neighbors now living next to a swinging party zone for out-of-towners, but they figure they’ll pore a few regulations over the top and have a new tax stream.

To citizens who notice too late that their neighborhood no longer has peace, or parking, or a sense of connection, the City Council will look like it did something.

People literally sleeping on the street cannot seem to move the hearts of City Council members, but cash-poor homeowners looking to monetize their million-dollar asset seem to have no trouble getting through.

There will be an avenue for taxation, a cure for the housing crisis, a solution to homelessness, but not the problem. We will make no progress as a society if we believe that justice is done simply by punishing one individual white supremacist. Racism is not just a historic problem or the work of a few individual “bad apples.”

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Offering no objection to Airbnb and Uber, which have market capitalizations in the billions, cheapens community values and creates a larger community burden for the sake of the few short-sighted people who see a personal benefit for themselves alone.

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Offering no objection to Airbnb and Uber, which have market capitalizations in the billions, cheapens community values and creates a larger community burden for the sake of the few short-sighted people who see a personal benefit for themselves alone.
Three years later, on Sept. 1, 1987, Brian Willson, a Vietnam veteran and anti-war protestor, sat on the tracks at the Concord Naval Weapons Station in an effort to block trains carrying bombs and nuclear warheads. A munitions train roared down the tracks, and 40 protesters watched as its brakes screeched. Yards away, it seemed to move no closer, but Sister Christine backpedaled, but Sister Christine Dobrowolski stood firm. Just 10 feet away, the train squealed to a halt. The group rejoiced and eight of us were later arrested for criminal trespass.

Sister Christine nearly gave her life in this vigil for peace. Love on the tracks was more costly than love in dreams.

When I was a journalism student in the late 1980s and I committed to several acts of civil disobedience at the Rocky Flats plutonium trigger plant in Colorado and at Malmstrom Air Force Base, a complex and control center for Minuteman missiles in Montana.

At that time, we read articles in peace journals like CoEvolution Quarterly that quoted Jim Douglass saying that movement activists needed to greatly deepen the ideals of nonviolence. In an interview, Douglass said that Willson showed great courage and added, “Brian’s pilgrimage is one of profound nonviolence. He continues that journey today.”

The tracks campaign continued into the late 1980s. Then, activists discovered a secret memo stating that the Department of Energy would ship nuclear weapons on the White Train. The reason given in the DOE memo was: “IN VIEW OF THE GROWING ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH ITS APPARENT FOCUS ON THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON THE WHITE TRAIN. The reason given in the DOE memo was: “IN VIEW OF THE GROWING ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH ITS APPARENT FOCUS ON THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON THE WHITE TRAIN.”

The peace movement had not stopped the nuclear arms race, but it had stopped the White Train in its tracks.

THE CALL TO RESISTANCE

Yet, as inspiring as these actions were, the theology I found in Douglass's first three books left an even deeper mark. In re-reading The Nonviolent Cross, Resistance and Contemplation, and Lightening East to West, I've rediscovered how greatly these books influenced my theological and political values, and what a strong foundation for activism they have given.

The Nonviolent Cross, written in 1968, is subtitled “A Theology of Revolution and Peace.” Douglass presents a profound response to the anguish of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Auschwitz and Dresden, and reflects on the terrible suffering inflicted on the people of Vietnam.

The Nonviolent Cross is one of the most significant theological works on the great issues of war and peace, nuclear disarmament, resistance and revolution ever written. It offers a forthright analysis of the ethical values underlying the just war tradition, the Christian perspective on peacemaking and Gandhian nonviolence.

But it is more than simply a fine work of theology. It is also a passionate call to resistance and revolution.

The Nonviolent Cross is the work of a Catholic theologian who had taught religion at Notre Dame, and worked closely with priests and archbishops, yet it was amazingly inclusive, open-minded and respectful of people from diverse faiths.

Douglass declared that Gandhi, a Hindu, was the greatest follower of Jesus in history, even though he obviously was not a Christian. He wrote with great admiration for the Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed in a Nazi death camp for resisting Hitler. Douglass even showed great empathy and respect for agnostics and atheists who cannot accept religious dogma, yet who often show great integrity in their search for the truth.

THE LAST OF THE JUST

In this Street Spirit interview, when asked whether a book had inspired him the most in his life, Douglass named The Last of the Just by André Schwarz-Bart. Asked why this book has such deep meaning, he replied, “Because of the evil he was dealing with: the Holocaust. And the depth of the response to it from the heart of a Jewish man — Ernie Levy in the book — who walked the path of the just person and took on the suffering of the world. For me, he became a figure like Jesus. The Last of the Just is an eloquent and anguished account of centuries of persecution, pogroms, and massacres that Jewish people suffered at the hands of so-called Christian nations from the time of the Crusades to the death camps at Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Treblinka.

In real life, the parents of André Schwarz-Bart were deported to Auschwitz and murdered in the Nazi concentration camp. In the tremendously moving final pages of The Last of the Just, the novel’s hero Ernie Levy is exterminated with cyanide gas in Auschwitz, along with countless Jewish children and adults.

The Last of the Just was of such paramount importance to Douglass that he devotes an entire chapter to it in The Nonviolent Cross. He unflinchingly confronts Catholic and Christian churches for centuries of anti-Semitism that laid the foundations for the Third Reich’s genocide. Yet it is not only the violence and prejudice of the past that concerns him. It is also the present and the future.

In The Nonviolent Cross, Douglass asks these piercing questions: “What has it been so necessary to defend what men call Christianity at every step of the way with weapons of a constantly increasing bar- ritor? If Christians are truly repentant for the oppression and torture of the Palestinian people. The role of the peacemaker and the justice seeker is to resist any nation, whatever faith it may or may not profess, that wages unjust wars, stores nuclear weapons and commits acts of violence against civilians.

The LAMED VAV

Everett Gendler, an American rabbi who was deeply involved in the civil rights movement and in the Peace Fellowship, wrote of Douglass’s chapter on The Last of the Just: “Is there anywhere so moving or profound an appreciation of The Last of the Just? ... I was so stirred that I was moved to include nearly all of it in our Yom Kippur service at the Jewish Center of Princeton, and I still find it one of the most affecting essays I have ever read.”

To this day, Douglass continues to ponder the deep meaning of the novel’s characterization of Ernie Levy as one of the Lamed Vav, the fabled 36 just and righteous people of Hebrew tradition.

The compassion of the Lamed Vav is essential for the life of humanity to continue, even though, according to this mystical teaching, the identities of the Lamed Vav are hidden from the world and may be unknown even to themselves. Yet, for the sake of these 36 humble and hidden givers of justice and compassion, God preserves the world, even in the face of its cruelty, violence and injustice.

What can this mean for people who seek peace and justice, people who offer sanctuary to the homeless and food to the hungry? Perhaps it means this: Whenever we make even a humble effort to seek peace or give mercy and compassion, more may depend on our work than we will ever know. It may be terribly important to not give up on our work for peace and justice. It may be hidden from us, but in the long run, simple acts of kindness and compassion may matter more to humanity than we can possibly imagine.
Acts of Resistance and Works of Mercy
Street Spirit Interview with Jim Douglass, Part 2

Interview by Terry Messman

Street Spirit: The White Train campaign mobilized people in hundreds of far-flung communities to stand in nonviolent resistance along the tracks where nuclear weapons were transported. How did the White Train campaign get started?

Jim Douglass: Well, the White Train campaign began as the Tracks campaign at a time when we didn’t yet know there was a White Train. Shelley and I had been looking at a house for years next to the Trident base. You literally had to cross the tracks to get into our house; there was no other access to it.

So we then began to call together people who lived alongside the tracks near the Hercules propellant plant in Utah which regularly makes shipments to the Trident base of the highly volatile fuel propellants for the Trident missiles.

We began monitoring those shipments. We would see them a couple times a week. So we began the tracks campaign around those shipments, with people between Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Trident submarine base near Seattle. We held a retreat for people alarmed by the railroad tracks in the summer of 1981. That was the beginning of the tracks campaign.

‘THE TRAIN OUT OF HELL’

Sawadsky, a wonderful Mennonite friend, immediately thought of the White Train. That was her contemplation of the Pantex plant and identify the departures of nuclear warheads. What was the second step of the campaign?

Douglass: Next, we mapped out more of the routes. Again it required train buffs, Tom Rawson, who was a wonderful peace-and-justice singer in Seattle and who also had been a follower of trains all his adult life, suddenly became a great asset in our work on the White Train.

We mapped out all the possible routes to the Trident base, and then we contacted people in all of those cities and began filling in the gaps. In the course of the tracks campaign, which continued through the 1980s, we had connections with people in over 250 towns and cities along the routes of the train.

And thanks to a woman named Hedy Sawadsky, a wonderful Mennonite friend, we had a watcher in Amarillo, Texas. She moved to live in Amarillo to watch the Pantex plant and identify the departures of the White Train. That was her contemplative/active vocation for several years.

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Douglass: Yes, that was the irony of the tracks campaign. The railroad tracks became a connection of community along the route of a Holocaust train. The tracks campaign went on into the late 1980s.

Spirit: It all began with only a handful of activists and train buffs. How did it feel when it blossomed so quickly into a campaign that involved hundreds of communities all up and down the tracks?

Douglass: It was an experience of hope: hope spelled “community.” [laughs] From the very beginning, we called our community “the Agape community.”

Spirit: Why the Agape community?

Douglass: Agape means “God’s love.” It is God. Love and truth are the primary names for God, not only in Gandhi’s vocabulary, but in the vocabulary of many great religious traditions. So it was a way of realizing that love and truth in action against a threat to all life on earth as posed by our weapons and policies.

That was a great development out of the Trident campaign. The Trident campaign and the tracks campaign are really the same campaign, but the tracks gave it a whole new dimension. We’re not the only bunch of people who were working in that way.

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As you know well, Brian Willson and the Nuremberg Actions community were doing the same thing at the Concord Naval Weapons Station, and we were in close communications with them, and with Brian who came to visit us at Ground Zero after he had been run over by the train. [Editor: See “Blood on the Tracks: Brian Willson Dances in Resistance to Weapons of Mass Murder,” Street Spirit, September 2012.]

Spirit: What did you feel about Brian’s sacrifice in losing his legs while blocking a weapons train at the Concord base?

Douglass: He is the only person in the world, I think, who could have had that happen to him and who would smile when I said, “Brian you’re the perfect person to have been run over by that train.”

Because he has such courage. And he has such a complete absorption of his own experience from Vietnam and from going through the jungles and roads of Nicaragua where he could have had his legs blown off at any time by the Contras. Those weapons were then blocked by Brian on the tracks of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, where they were being shipped to Nicaragua when he was run over by that train. Brian’s pilgrimage is one of profound nonviolence. He continues on that journey today.

Spirit: Brian not only smiles, he danced on the railroad tracks at Concord on the anniversary of the loss of his legs.

Douglass: He does indeed.
Members of the Walk for a Peaceful Future demonstrate on June 6, 1992, on Mount Carmel, above A Lit Military Prison in support of Israeli soldiers imprisoned for refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories.

Photo credit: Anna L. Snowdon
Dorothy Day’s Works of Mercy

Douglass: The Catholic Worker vision is not to be another agency for the poor, but to live with people who are overcome by that form of oppression. Dorothy Day was inspired by a man named Peter Maurin, a French peasant who was a student of the social teachings of the Catholic Church and of the Gospels. The two of them began a movement in the early 1930s which said this bottom line: Respond to all those in need. Respond to all the evils of war and injustices of society. They also established houses of hospitality so that in everybody’s home, there can be a place for those who need help, because these are our brothers and sisters just as much as they are the immediate members of our family.

Spirit: Many consider Dorothy Day, one of the most significant figures in the history of nonviolence. What have you learned personally from her life’s work?

Dorothy Day led that vision by being repeatedly arrested for issues ranging from the United Farmworkers to peace and nuclear war. Even before she became a Catholic Worker, she was involved in the suffragist movement for women’s right to vote. She was arrested repeatedly for resisting nuclear weapons.

Dorothy Day and Gandhi taught that poverty is the worst form of violence. She spent a significant amount of time in jail. It’s really a way of trying to live the vision of the Sermon on the Mount and taking it on personally. “Personalism” is the way of life she lived. Personalism means that a teaching of the Gospel only becomes real through our relationships to one another. So a Catholic Worker is not only a way of caring for people. It’s a way of being with people and working together in community.

Douglass: Poverty is at the heart of violence because the weapons that we have in our midst that now threaten to destroy the earth are means of protecting privilege. That’s why we exist. And the people who are at the bottom of that pyramid of violence are all over the world, of course, and we have to seek them out.

This society and its institutions deliberately create barriers among us — like freeways that arch over the poorest areas of the country. Or people fly over those areas in planes or ignore in one way or another that form of violence. What Gandhi did, and what Dorothy Day did, was to instead live in community with people on the lowest level of society, without pretending that they could ever experience that poverty themselves.

Because whether you’re Gandhi or Dorothy Day, you have immense resources that you have developed by simply responding to people in that way. Because they will join you and that gives you enormous power in solidarity and community. Before he became the one we now identify as Gandhi, Gandhi was simply one lone individual trying to be a British lawyer. But once he identified himself with the poorest people in India, he became, in a sense, hundreds of millions of people. That’s why he was giving us that teaching of his: Only if you help the last person you have been enticed by what you’re doing... That was his daily way of life.

Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton are all examples of a fusion of direct action — especially resistance to evil on a huge scale — and prayer. Because they realized evil that has enormous consequences, both hopeful and traumatic.

Spirit: Why did you write in Resistance and Contemplation that the interaction between political resistance and contemplation is so vital in nonviolent movements?

Douglass: Well, at the time, and today as well, there was a tension between those who were resisting the war and the racism and the sexism by fairly direct and extreme- ly active means, and those who were turning on and dropping out, especially through drugs, or through countercultural activities that didn’t engage directly the oppression. Nonviolence is an integration of those two dimensions in a deeper way. Gandhi and Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton are all examples of a fusion of direct action — especially resistance to evil on a huge scale — and an emphasis on the contemplative side.

Spirit: For many, the cross is a vague, spiritual symbol, but the Roman Empire used the cross to execute revolutionaries. How do you understand the meaning of the cross for nonviolent movements?

Douglass: The person I was most influenced by was Gandhi. Gandhi’s great statement regarding the cross is in his Christmas sermon to British people on a boat returning to India after a conference in London. He was asked to talk about Jesus on Christmas Day.

He gave an extraordinary reflection, the start of which was a statement, “Living Christ means a living cross. Without it, life is a living death. Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the Natural Law of Love.” I’ve been thinking about that ever since I first heard it.

Spirit: What does it mean to you?

Douglass: It means that to understand the cross as an arm招-engaging through resistance to evil is to engage in a transformation of that evil. When I hear those words, it is not embodied by Gandhi’s life. It would mean nothing apart from Gandhi. I know his story and I loved his story. I tried to understand the cross in relation to the message of Gandhi.

He accepts suffering in order to resist it at a level that is impossible to understand intellectually or theoretically. It has to be embodied. And embodying it means walking the same path that Dorothy Day has walked, where you live with people in poverty, and you go to jail in order to resist wars and violence of every kind, and you are prepared to give your life in order to stand with people who are being destroyed by our own government.

That was Gandhi’s whole life and it is Dorothy Day’s life and it’s what Shelley and I aspire to as part of the Catholic Worker. It’s what we do. It’s why we were motivated by the early Church and it’s the story of liberation movements all around the world today. Of social scale — and prayer — and an emphasis on personalism — and embodied the meaning of Jesus’s cross.

Gandhi’s Vision of Satyagraha: Holding Firm to Truth

Spirit: Many of the principles of nonviolent resistance as “satyagraha” — holding firm to truth. What are the essential steps in building satyagraha campaigns, both in the United States and internationally?

Douglass: The most basic thing is the commitment of the people who seek to live with those who have never been satyagraha campaigns in Gandhi’s life if he hadn’t created communities outside of which they could be waged. The asthmatics in South Africa and later in India were the bases of his work. And even though the number of people living in community and taking vows of nonvio- lence is growing, it is still a small number who are prepared to give your life in order to stand with people who are being destroyed.

The first step in a campaign is to understand. It’s a research and understanding. So whether it’s racism in South Africa, or a nuclear sub base in Washington, Washington, you study and you try to understand. In our case, it meant understanding a nuclear submarine that could destroy the world as we know it and what is out there for ourselves? Through a man named Robert Aldridge who helped design the weapon. If you go to jail understanding the problem, and then you open yourself to the people on the other side of the issue. In our case, when Robert Aldridge came to support our campaign in Honolulu, Hawaii, and when we learned that his occupation was designing the weapon, we had instructed our translator to say that he resigned his job. So that’s the way a campaign works, across all lines. If you start denouncing

Interview with Jim Douglass page 12
Gandhi's satyagraha campaigns were based on "truth-force." But if you experiment with truth, only then it becomes satyagraha, truth-force, and that Martin Luther King called truth-force, love-force and soul-force, and that Gandhi also called the reign of God, and that Gandhi even titled his autobiography "The Story of My Experiments with Truth." In other words, "Walk the talk. Live the verse you're citing from Jesus or Gandhi."

Douglass: I've been to Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Iraq. The first trip I took to the Middle East was within a month of our arrival in Birmingham. It's been a long time since I've been to Beit Sahour, which is the town identified as Beit Sahour, next to Bethlehem. They all had their hands held high making the peace sign, their faces smiling. They were celebrating their resistance to the Israeli Defense Forces which had surrounded their town for a month because the members of the town refused to pay their taxes. That town, Beit Sahour, which is the traditional site of the shepherds' field in Luke's Gospel, had become an example to people across the globe of the refusal to cooperate with their own oppression. They said, "We do not want to pay for their pressures in order to disarm a sub-continental power. Gandhi was already of central importance to me. India. Gandhi was already of central importance to me. India. Gandhi was already of central importance to me.

Douglass: I don't like the term "paciﬁsm" because it immediately suggests something passive. And it's also related specifically to one issue — that of war. I don't like the term "passive resis-
tance," nor did Gandhi. In fact, he replaces it with "truth." But if you experiment with truth, only then it becomes satyagraha, truth-force, and that Martin Luther King called truth-force, love-force and soul-force, and that Gandhi also called the reign of God, and that Gandhi even titled his autobiography "The Story of My Experiments with Truth." In other words, "Walk the talk. Live the verse you're citing from Jesus or Gandhi."
Douglass: We had a big vehicle filled with medical supplies in the initial challenge to the sanctions. It was the spring of the year after the first gulf war had ended, but sanctions were still in effect. A year later, we were arrested on a sec- ond trip. The United States had been shipping arms to the Galilee, and I was in jail in Galilee for several days on that walk. I didn’t think I would get into the country because I had already been barred. We were an international group traveling around about 15 countries on that second walk and we had come together to support a vision of peace between all the people in the Middle East. It was illegal to walk across the green line without permission of the Israeli government.

Of course, we weren’t asking anyone’s permission and they weren’t giving it. We were arrested as part of the group. The key point of the arrests in that incident because we had a much bigger group and many more countries, was that we crossed the green line, we weren’t just a dozen or so, but a much larger number.

Spirit: When you crossed the green line, what country were you arrested in? Did you cross it all the way? Douglass: In Galilee. And then we went to jail in a Galillean prison.

Spirit: That’s heavy symbolism! How long were you in jail there?

Douglass: About 10 days before we were released and kicked out of the country. But we had enough time before we were forced to leave to hold a demonstration in support of the people in the prison where Kathy is. So it was a good group, and we did a lot of things before we were forced to leave. (Editor:VINUM was imprisoned for 18 years for revealing details of Israel’s nuclear weapons program because of his opposition to weapons of extermination. Daniel Ellsberg called him the “preeminent hero of the nuclear era.”)

Spirit: When the U.S. declared war on Iraq in 2003, did you protest the war?

Douglass: When the invasion of Iraq began, I went with a Christian Peacemakers Team to Baghdad. CPT and Voices in the Wilderness joined a larger group called the Iraq Peace Team. Our CPT group went in during the first week of the war, from Amman across the desert into Baghdad. We were between the U.S. Army and the Iraqi Army.

Spirit: What was it like to be in Iraq when the war broke out?

Douglass: We were almost killed. The U.S. forces were on a hill at one point. Our cars slowed down and stopped because a car just ahead of us had been hit by gunfire. The driver who was driving us called in to see their families on the West Bank — and I was barred from Israel! [laughing] I was very shocked by that. When we came to the gate, an official was examining the documents and passports of people who wanted to go in there — including a mathematics professor who was trying to go. When he came to me, he said, “Oh, Mr. Douglass,” I remember I had been his jailer in Jericho — the same man! He said, “Well, we won’t let you in, but I don’t think you’re going to be allowed to go back in.”

He did call, and I was barred. [laughing] But we were then given permission to go to Iraq by the Iraqi government, and I was able for the first time to visit Baghdad with Kathy and the group.

Spirit: Were you also delivering medical supplies to the victims of war?

Douglass: No! We were a group of people from the United States on a peace walk. We came to Iraq to speak to the government, and they allowed us to go in. We were usually in the sights of the weapons of our own troops. For a few days, we were just as vulnerable as the Iraqi people, and that remained the case for the following week when we were in Baghdad. Explosions were occurring all over the city from missile attacks by our fleet in the Gulf.

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City Council Delays Vote on Homeless Laws from page 1

"ambassadors"...two homeless men on March 19 when they thought no one was watching. The overflow between all these issues was not lost on the public, which swelled each hearing with mutual supporters. But Mayor Qualls continued to want the anti-homeless proposals back to the agenda committee meeting in late August with Maio's amendments, after initially resisting Woodward's. With a bit of trepidation and doubt, the mayor finally recognized that attempting to continue the marathon meeting ran the risk of obliging not just the commissioner who invited Lepera to help run it to watch the sunrise together.

Four people were there in support of the anti-homeless laws: two from the Downtown Berkeley Association which wrote the original proposals, one from the Telegraph Merchants Association, and Chamber of Commerce President Pam Armstrong. They looked pretty small compared to the hundreds who had rallied against the anti-homeless proposals on the street corner ... in the 1950s as an effort to curb problem peddlers. Some merchants said re-tooled the original anti-homeless proposals for repressive new efforts to dog the vulnerable. Leaders of merchant groups rely on——...of all people——to protect human rights are unclear.

The Berkeley City Council majority seems unmoved by the moral, legal and even practical arguments. The next steps for a community dedicated to preventing a next generation of homeless are unclear.

BERKELEY'S NEW ANTI-POOR LAWS

Berkeley City Manager Christine Daniel re-tooled the original anti-homeless proposals for the benefits of the "ambassadors" assaulting two homeless people. According to the City Manager as foundation for the necessity to design opportunities to sort out these large issues, to design opportunities to sort out the problems of the future.

The proposed laws need to go back to the councilmembers how big their beds are. Because it isn't just poor and homeless people who have a broad target painted on their backs by this Berkeley City Council. They should be ticketed to death over a street spirit.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The Berkeley City Council is not entirely impervious to reason, which Mayor Bates proved by finally calling a halt to the anti-homeless ordinances on July 20, 2015. The overlap between all these issues, to design opportunities to sort out these large issues, to design opportunities to sort out the problems of the future.

"I am also amazed by the restrictions on free-speech-related activity. It won't be legal to sit on a milk crate while talking Street Spirit without first getting a permit five days in advance. And most places in our commercial corridors you won't be able to sit at all. That's pretty outrageous.

Neumann's observations about the ordinance's restrictions on personal belongings and free speech indicate matters which need to be studied by Berkeley's social workers to draw from them.

"Would you like to make life even harder for homeless people?" or "Would you like to drum homeless and poor people out of town?" or "Would you like to make life even harder for homeless people?" or "Would you like to drum homeless and poor people out of town?" or "Would you like to make life even harder for homeless people?"

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WHAT CAN WE DO?
Mental Health: Investing in Compassion and Empathy

by Bhaani Singh and Kenneth Hahn

Berkeley is a city that boasts the reputation of free speech, liber- al thought, and environmentally conscious behavior; a land that prides itself diversity and social progress; a place that many of us find simultaneously chaotic and serene. Like the tie-dye shirts seen on Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley's culture is a twist of various academics, black traditions, and political thought.

The homeless population, too, is woven into the fabric of our history. Yet, despite its familiar presence, we are left with many dangling threads of housing and mental health which must be carefully sewn back into this fabric to ensure community strength and solidarity.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), more than 610,000 people experience homelessness every night, including about 1.6 million children. These numbers are far lower than the actual figure — closer to 3 million people in many estimates — because HUD only counts once a year and the number of homeless persons changes as people move in and out of being home-

It is often observed that about one in five of these individuals suffer from severe mental health issues, and have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, sub-

several disorder, bipolar disorder, and depression. These mental disorders may affect an individual's ability to carry out essential activities for survival and maintain stable relationships with family or friends.

The social selection hypothesis states that as a result of schizophrenia impairing earning power and income, schizophrenic persons are often forced to move into poorer neighborhoods. On the other hand, the social causation hypothesis states that people with low socioeconomic status develop mental disorders as a result of the stresses and adversities they face.

Thus, mental disorders and poverty are often thought to be of a cyclical nature. Furthermore, unmet mental health needs affect one's physical health. According to the general population, homeless people have poorer health outcomes, including higher rates of tuberculosis, asthma, dia-

betes, and depressive disorders. People living in poverty, both mentally ill individuals also suffer from substance use disorders, as a way to self-medicate or to cope with the stresses they face.

As a result of poor mental and physical health, as well as social stigma and inade-

quate income, these individuals face barri-

ers to housing, employment, and a healthy lifestyle.

Many of the mental health issues faced by the homeless population can be treated with medication and counseling. Effective treatments have been identified for some individuals, but many have reported adverse and severely incapacitating reactions to antipsychotic medications.

However, when these conditions are neglected, they end up not only costing our healthcare system millions of dollars in hospitalization, but also prolonging human suffering. In Alameda County, nearly one in five adults reported that they needed professional help for emotional health or alcohol use in 2007.

Unfortunately, a systemic discrimina-
tion against the mentally disabled is prevalent in both public and private services to the underprivileged populations in Berkeley through free social and health services to the underserved.

Through our conversations with many clients, we have come to realize that most people do not just want the services we have. Rather, they want to be acknowled-
ged as people and to be treated with respect and dignity, something which they do not experience very often.

When society ignores people over and over again, for days and years at a time, people are forced to wonder why they are being ignored. They are provoked into questioning their existence. As a result, it is important to acknowledge that issues in our community exist and by doing so, we can begin to foster dialogue and target interventions to help individuals break away from the cycle of mental disorder, hospitals, streets, and poverty.

Another important step is to create per-

manent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing is a mixture of afford-

able housing and a package of supportive services to help people attain education and employment opportunities, housing stability, and improved health and social outcomes.

These housing programs often work with community workers to reach out to mentally ill homeless persons and help them find support groups, learn daily liv-

ing skills, and access treatment.

Many research studies, including those from the National Mental Health Association, reveal that in addition to helping most people break free from homelessness, this housing approach lowers public costs for prison stays and hospi-
tal treatment, and is effective for people with mental health issues.

Even in 2015, many current proposals in Berkeley, such as preventing beding on sidewalks and sitting near tree wells, are seemingly targeted against the homeless population. Spending money towards ini-
tiatives like these will not solve homeless-

ness. It targets a very important group in our society and attempts to remove them from view, an experience that can easily be construed as dehumanizing.

Rather than increased citations and arrests, city officials should invest in affordable supportive housing and increase the number of outreach workers who can help homeless persons find physical and mental stability off the streets.

The government should consider increasing funding towards these support-

ive programs and mental health services so that even when economic times change, services will be still be stable and provide help for homeless individuals, particularly those with mental health problems — a group that comprised an estimated 40 percent of the homeless pop-

ulation, is to acknowledge that the issue is important to acknowledge that issues in our community exist and by doing so, we can begin to foster dialogue and target interventions to help individuals break away from the cycle of mental disorder, hospitals, streets, and poverty.

One step towards alleviating mental disorders, especially in the homeless pop-

ulation, is to acknowledge that the issue exists. Many people who suffer from a mental disorder wish to be treated; they just don’t have the resources to receive the necessary care towards a healthier lifestyle. Homeless individuals often come from backgrounds of social disad-

vantage and economic instability, which can trigger or exacerbate the development of mental health problems over time.

Over the past few years, we have had the privilege of working with the Suitcase Clinic, a group of dedicated students and profession-

als who attempt to slowly bridge the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged populations in Berkeley through free social and health services to the underserved.

For residents of Berkeley and Albany, the Berkeley Mental Health Mobile Crisis TEAM delivers crisis intervention services, consultation on mental health issues, and disaster and trauma-related mental health services. Their telephone number is 1-800-273-TALK (Nationwide Hotline).

At the Suitcase Clinic, we have come to realize that people want to be treated with respect and dignity — something which they do not experience very often.

Instead of increased citations and arrests, Berkeley officials should invest in affordable supportive housing and increase the number of outreach workers who can help homeless persons find physical and mental stability off the streets.

The homeless population is part of our community. They are part of the Berkeley we all love and are proud of. It is time to stop labeling homelessness and mental dis-

orders as controlled or personal choices, and to socially integrate individuals suffer-

ing from these situations into society.

For a peaceful world and a stronger Berkeley, we must invest ourselves in compassion and empathy. The dangling threads of our community need to be sewn, for we cannot ignore those whose humanity is intertwined with our own.

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THE SUITCASE CLINIC

The Suitcase Clinic is a humanitarian student-run organization and volunteer community group offering free health and social services to underserved populations since 1989. We operate three multi-ser-

vice drop-in centers in Berkeley, and are open on Monday and Tuesday nights to anyone in need, regardless of income, res-

idence, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. For more information, please visit our website at www.suitcaseclinic.org.

We do not offer professional mental health services, instead we offer a lis-

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800-812-5254. More information can be found at the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services website, www.aetcs.org.
Ending “No Pets Allowed” policies would greatly reduce the number of pets killed in shelters or abandoned on the street.

by Joan Clair

In the Bay Area, thousands of people face eviction, homelessness and economic hardships because landlords have raised their rents beyond all reason. We are often told that all this injustice is due to the inequitable workings of the marketplace. Since the market economy is a faceless abstraction, it offers a convenient way to draw our attention away from the real-life landlords and real estate owners who have caused this economic misery through their greed and reckless profiteering.

The so-called market economy has caused countless cases of eviction-for-profit and displaced thousands of renters in the Bay Area. This system extracts at the expense of life, and might better be called the “Heartless Market Place.” Along with causing homelessness for thousands of people, this system has also caused untold suffering for the animal companions of tenants. The heartless market place is an area where no pets are allowed. Many tenants are unable to find an affordable place to live where pets are also allowed, and are thus coerced to surrender their pets to a “shelter” which puts the animal to sleep in a few days if no one can be found.

There is also face death by being euthanized in animal shelters, many homeless people die on the streets through lack of shelter and housing. Our society has an uneasy conscience about the deaths of homeless people on the streets and countless homeless animals in shelters.

Two groups are discriminated against in rental housing: nonhuman animals and low-income people. Animals are not protected by anti-discrimination laws regarding other human residents. Other words, “No Pets Allowed” is legal. Similarly, landlords are not required to consider Section 8 housing applicants for their housing units.

“No Kill” Animal Shelters

Government studies have been made in the “no kill” animal shelter movement which began about 30 years ago. However, millions of unwanted animals are still euthanized in shelters yearly, and even “no kill” shelters turn away animals that are not considered adoptable.

There are many reasons .why animals end up in such economic difficulties, job loss, divorce and break-ups, death in the family, and foreclosure. However, underlying all these hardships, another problem often results in the death of companion animals — namely, the inabilty, when a crisis hits, to find housing where pets are allowed. “No Pets Allowed” is a typical restriction in the heartless marketplace.

With skyrocketing rents and stagnation in workers’ wages, it becomes more difficult to find any affordable housing at all. Even with these inequitable conditions, a new way of looking at the nonhuman creatures who share our lives has emerged and is gaining strength.

More and more people regard the nonhuman animals who share their lives with us as members of a different and less worthy species. As a result, when for any of the reasons listed previously a person must find new housing and cannot because of “No Pets Allowed” stipulations, it is the loss of a family member that is at stake.

THE LOSS OF A FAMILY MEMBER

The loss can mean a death sentence for the nonhuman family member who is turned over to a shelter when a new home cannot be found. Under similar circumstances, would we turn over a human child to a shelter which permits euthanasia if we could not find a residence which allows children? Fortunately, human infants are now covered by anti-discrimination laws regarding housing. However, at one time, they were discriminated against as well.

Now the laws must be changed so that nonhuman animal companions, such as dogs and cats, are included in the category of family members who, along with other family members such as human children, cannot be denied housing. There are safeguards landlords have in regard to any new residents, including a right to check references, including those from prior landlords. Young children and young animals can pose risks, but not ones that cannot be corrected.

The anti-discrimination laws in housing make it mandatory to accept service animals. Animals that are not designated as service animals may be as well-behaved. Finding responsible renters is what’s important. And, obviously, there are already legal restrictions in place regarding the keeping of wild or dangerous animals in rental units.

Eliminating the “No Pets Allowed” practices of landlords would greatly reduce the number of pets that are killed in shelters or put out on the street. It is a measure that would take the “no kill” animal shelter movement to a new level of success in saving lives.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has said we must “abandon the archaic and unjust boundary of ‘human’ that we use to justify inflicting pain, suffering and death on billions of beings.”

In my own life, I have experienced discrimination towards nonhuman family members with my dog, Wind-of-Fire, my cat, Moon, and my dog, Clair. When I came to attend a Berkeley seminary in 1980 with my dog, Wind-of-Fire, I was permitted to board us. However, because of a week of arrival, I was told I had to get rid of Wind-of-Fire or move off campus. I did neither, and we won out in the end, but my consciousness was changed.

We also had to fight the school administration’s plan to establish a “No Pets Allowed” policy, and we won that battle also. However, these threats to my family member made me realize how vulnerable nonhuman animals are in our society, even in liberal institutions.

My next animal companion, Moon, was a cat whose human companion had left him with her roommates when she went to a

A homeless cat in a Berkeley shelter. A home was never found for this cat — just one of the many lives lost.

Joan Clair photo

The Berkeley Council Member Proposes the Abolition of “No Pet” Policies

by Joan Clair

In October of 2014, Jesse Arreguin submitted a proposal to the Berkeley City Council to consider disallowing “No Pets” policies as a condition of tenancy. Unfortunately, there were not enough votes to support his position. The recommendation was tabled.

However, this was a remarkable first step to end discrimination against nonhuman family members in housing. To our knowledge, it was the first such attempt in the nation. We hope this will lead to similar proposals and eventual legislation.

Arreguin presented many practical reasons for initiating such a recommendation. These included more cost-effective options for animal care services, better treatment of animals and a greater number of admissions as a result of the availability of more housing, thereby saving the lives of more animals.

Arreguin also showed how landlords would still have the legal protections. The animal advocacy groups he contacted were supportive of this measure. The following excerpt from Arreguin’s proposal is a clear statement of humane values.

“Allowing pet owners to keep their animals when they seek housing will also help cut down on the number of animals abandoned in Berkeley... If fewer animals are abandoned because their owners are able to keep them no matter where they live in Berkeley, there would be fewer animals needing the shelter and care that BACS provides daily. Conversely, allowing tenants to have pets may increase the adoption of animals from BACS with resulting animal registration fee revenue. This would save the lives of animals who might have been abandoned and hurt or killed, and allow BACS to save more lives by giving them more money in the shelter and save more money to continue to provide top-notch care to the animals who come to BACS in need.”

For more information, contact Jesse Arreguin at (510) 981-7140; E-mail: jarexreg@gmail.com; Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Building, 2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704. The proposal can be found at http://www.cityof-berkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014-10_D e c t_D ocument s /2 014 -1 0 - 2 1 _ben_m 24_5E2% 05% CaN_PR% E2% 80 %9D_Policies.aspx.

Street Spirit

July 2015