
Wallyhouse News



A Franciscan Catholic Worker at St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church,
720 North King Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817; stelizabeth720.org
(805) 535-5677; bdbennett235@gmail.com Seventh Issue - July 2020

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker movement on May 1, 1933 in NY City with the inaugural edition of the Catholic Worker newspaper. Their vision, based on the radical life and message of Jesus, continues today in over 200 CW communities, in cities and on farms, throughout the world. Wallyhouse, the Honolulu Catholic Worker founded in March 2018, too, is committed to nurturing the poor in body, mind and spirit, non-violent resistance of oppression and practicing radical acts of kindness.



To perform the works of mercy becomes a dangerous practice. Our Baltimore House was closed as a public nuisance because we took in blacks as well as whites. The [staff] were arrested and thrown in jail overnight and accused of running a disorderly house.... It is a good thing to live from day to day and from hour to hour. —*All the Way to Heaven: selected letters of Dorothy Day, January 1948*)

Confessions of a Racist Mom by barbara bennett, tssf

In January 1990, my husband and I decided to adopt another child. We had two children, a natural born daughter aged 12 years and an adopted son of 9 years. We had moved into a large 4 bedroom rectory and decided the empty bedroom needed to be filled with new life. And so we called Children's Home Society, the adoption agency we had worked with before, and began what we expected to be a long process.

On that first go at adoption, we had opted for a special needs child. This began a process of discerning what "special need" was and how severe. No, to a non-white child. Bill did not want the adopted status to be obvious at a casual glance. No, to blindness. As an artist, I could not imagine raising a child who could not see the beauty of creation. Maybe to deaf. Yes to medical problems if they were within our ability to manage financially and time wise—as if we could control any of it. Sooner than expected, we were gifted with a child with a complex of medical issues that, while demanding, we did more-or-less manage.

Now, back at the agency, we again opted for special needs, but this time not limited to medical but open to enduring issues such as blindness, and a non-white. How about bi-racial, black and white? Yes, we said. Wonderful, CHS replied, because there are only two other families in the state of California willing to adopt a black/white child into their family. Only two others in the whole state! I still find that stunning. But first, by state law, for 6 months the agency had to seek a family with a similar racial make-up; if one could not be found, then the child could be placed elsewhere. And so it happened: as quick as November 1990, we welcomed newborn Bennett, birthed from a white mother and black father, into our home. And what a blessing he has been.

We made attempts to honor Bennett's black heredity. He had books by black authors, beginning with Jack Ezra Keats classic *The Snowy Day* to Faith Ringgold's *Tar Beach* and later biographies, his favorites being on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jimi Hendrix. We knew we could not provide Black culture, but we did take



Self-portrait by
Bennett Baumgarten, 2015

Bennett on a sabbatical to live in Kabale, Uganda when he was 7 years and I took him on a youth mission near Durban, South Africa when he was 14.

What we did not do was talk about race. Truth be told, I was afraid to bring it up for appearing racist and besides I didn't think it important. It was better to be "color-blind" wasn't it? Years later, in 2009, a guest at the Oakland Catholic Worker accused me of being racist. He didn't like how I looked at him. Michael, a co-worker, said, "barbara is cool; she is color-blind." "I don't want her to be color-blind," he retorted, "I want her to see me for who I am, a good, struggling black man."

In spite of our efforts, Bennett, a black child growing up in a white world, was "marked" as different. It began when he started school. He was an obviously bright child but the school wanted to put him into "special education." The battle against the school's belittlement of our son, without valid cause, continued to the point that I finally took him out of school and homeschooled him until we moved north to Montana, where we put him into Montessori. Realizing he needed to be kept safe, we kept him in private school through high school.

What I failed to understand at the time, and all the way to the present Black Lives Matter movement, is that it was all about the insidiousness of racism. He was a black child with white privilege. The kind, talented and good-humored adult he has become is a gift of that. But it would not be enough.

On more than one occasion, I sat down with Bennett and told him that he had to be more careful, more polite, more respectful, more helpful than his peers because he was "marked somehow" and if he did not exceed at being "perfect" he would be the one harassed, punished or arrested. He knew that from experience, but he asked me why, and here is my confession, I said "I don't know". And I didn't. I was clueless. I knew the reality of the racism that my son was suffering but I did not know or see that it was *racism*. I am glad I was not so blind that I did not see that he was treated differently and that I knew to keep him safe. It wasn't until the rise of Black Lives Matter that I realized that the "mark" on Bennett was the color of his skin.

Bennett thrived and is today a successful graphic artist. Love is the answer.

Black Lives Matter

All lives matter
That's not the point
It is Black lives that today are under siege

"Black lives matter"
Three terse words
Speak to the moment

If only the cry had been
"Jewish lives matter"

If only the cry had been
"Cambodian lives matter"

If only the cry had been
"Russian lives matter"

If only the cry had been
"Salvadorian lives matter"

If only the cry had been
"American Indians lives matter"

If only the cry had been
"Hawaiian lives matter"

If only
If only
If only

So let us make sure
That today
"Black lives matter"

So that we do not
Grieve later that
We missed the moment

To right a wrong
That is a blight
On all of us.

Tom Dinell, June 15, 2020
UH Newman Center Community
Honolulu, HI



CW companion Deacon Steve Costa
at BLM march at state capital



Virginia Maksymowicz rework of Fritz Eichenberg’s “Christ of the Breadline” for social distancing in 2020.

House News

❖ Our service during the Pandemic

We **continue** to feed people, and have even been a bit overwhelmed by the increase of guests coming for food. In May we served over 2,000 bags of groceries; in June over 3,000! (Before the pandemic we were averaging 700 bags each month.) We have a relatively safe method that maintains social distancing and everyone, servers and guests, wear masks. If someone does not have a mask, we have one to offer thanks to volunteers who make them and keep us well supplied. We also continue to charge devices, offer basic hygiene products, simple first aid, and mail distribution. **Mahalo!** (thank you) to the many **volunteers** who have stepped up to help prepare food bags and to help with distribution! And a special thanks to St. Andrew’s Cathedral and their sandwich ministry—they bring us sack lunches throughout the week to hand out.



Kay’s Cafe, our weekly hot lunch program is now a take-out meal, packaged with the same delicious home cooked food as before. It too has seen a near doubling of guests.

We have temporarily **discontinued** hot showers, laundry service, Artfelt, Clarification of Thought and Senior Reflection gatherings. To avoid exhaustion on account of the increased number of guests, we have also discontinued our services on Friday afternoons. Our hours are now Monday-Saturday 8:00am - noon and Monday-Thursday 2:00pm - 4:00pm. Friday afternoons have become a welcome moment of quiet.

Our monthly Peace vigil protest against nuclear arms in front of the state capital building **resumed** as of June (see concluding article by Martha Hennessy on why this is so important).

And we have a **new** offering: a Port-a-potty to provide for emergency bathrooms needs.



❖ **We continue to pray:** **God our healer, keep us aware of your presence, support us with your power, comfort us with your protection, give us strength, and establish us in your peace.**

Amen. (from New Zealand Book of Common Prayer)

❖Catholic Campaign for Human Development Grant

In June, we were granted \$4,000 from CCHD for an intern program with the stipulation that it be “run by the poor for the poor”. We asked Mrs. Ignacia Terno, our skilled parish house-mom and Charles Steffey our master gardener to mentor our two women in Elizabeth House in cooking, sewing and gardening. Each of the four participants receive a stipend; Mrs. Terno and Charles for teaching and Lovely and Jinna for their work as interns. Almost two months into the program, we are seeing good things. Lovely and Jinna have now prepared and served three hot lunches for Kay’s Cafe—all with rave reviews. Jinna is making masks and Lovely is learning how to care for the traditional and aquaponic gardens. It is gratifying to watch the enthusiasm and pride of all the participants in the program. We are grateful to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hawai’i and the CCHD for their support of a potentially life-changing program.



Interns Lovely Reiger & Jinna Stevens



Kings Bay Plowshares 7: (lft-rt, fnt-bck)Clare Grady, Liz McAlister, Carmen Trotta, Martha Hennessy, Patrick O'Neill, Steve Kelly, SJ, Mark Colville

A Special Word from Martha Hennessy

(Martha is a granddaughter of Dorothy Day and divides her time between her Vermont family farm and the New York CW house.)

April 4th, 2018, was the 50th anniversary of the state killing of Martin Luther King, Jr. On that day myself and six Catholic friends and Catholic Worker community members walked on to the United States Kings Bay Naval Base in southern Georgia. The base, land dedicated to the US military by President Jimmy Carter who served in the navy, maintains half of our nuclear attack submarine fleet called Trident. One such submarine can destroy an entire country. Two of us posted an indictment on the Strategic Weapons Facility Atlantic administration building charging the president of the United States, the naval base captain, and specifically the Trident nuclear weapons system of violation of

international law, war crimes and crimes against humanity. If it were allowed, a serious legal and moral scrutiny of the criminally insane intent of this base would surely lead to the end of this project of omnicide.

We also delivered a book, “The Doomsday Machine; Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner” by Daniel Ellsberg to the employees and soldiers of the base. We felt that they deserved to know the history of the development of our nuclear arsenal and its intended use. As the Kings Bay Plowshares 7, we also brought banners, hammers, and blood to proclaim the sacramental, nonviolent, symbolic disarmament of the nuclear beast. We were subsequently put on trial the week of October 21st, 2019, and were found guilty on all charges of conspiracy, destruction of naval property, depredation of government property, and trespass.

At one point during the trial one of the jurors asked a question; “Are there nuclear weapons on the base?” The question went unanswered.

One of our co-defendants, Father Steve Kelly, S.J. has remained in the Glynn County, Brunswick, GA. jail since the action. Liz McAlister, widow of Phil Berrigan, founder of the Plowshares movement, was sentenced in June by video to time served (18 months) and three years probation. The rest of us are yet to be sentenced due to delays with the pandemic, and our choice to exercise our constitutional right to appear in person to be sentenced before the judge.

The world has changed significantly in the past two years, especially in the past four months with the COVID-19 virus coming unleashed into the world. Maybe it is time to examine what is amiss with our spirituality, what is in our social and economic practice that facilitates such disasters. Of the chaos and uncertainty that further tears the veil from the face of capitalism, exposing our economic abuse and racist incompetence. Isn’t climate destruction and nuclear holocaust enough of an apocalypse? As followers of Christ in the 21st century we are still called upon to love one another, give each other courage and hope, and to speak out for the protection of the most vulnerable among us.

Swords into plowshares now!

Martha Hennessy
July 13th, 2020



Donations: All donations are tax deductible

Can now be made online with **Givlia** at St. E’s website: stelizabeth720.org, click on “GIVE” then follow instructions for Givlia. Choose “Catholic Worker Fund” on the “where do you want to give” dropdown menu.

Or, we still like checks which may be made payable to:
St. Elizabeth’s Episcopal Church, memo: **Wallyhouse CW**
Mail to: 720 North King St, Honolulu, HI 96817.