

WHERE THERE IS NO LOVE PUT LOVE AND YOU WILL FIND LOVE. St. John of the Cross

– art by Kristen Brunelli

## DENVER CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSE

NEWSLETTER  
FALL 2020

### AIN'T IT WONDERFUL

[Editor's note: For those of you who didn't know us then, Kristen and Marcus were live-in workers at the Denver Catholic Worker in 2012-2015.]

*Ain't it wonderful to be where I've always wanted to be? For the first time I'll breathe free in the New York City. – Harry Nilsson*

Eight years later, I am back in the city of my heart. Of course, it's a strange time to be back. People are masked. Their arms are crossed. They look down. I haven't been able to go listen to live music, go to a bar, get dinner at a fancy restaurant since we moved to Brooklyn in June.

But I've gotten to know my block better every day, for better or for worse. The houses on our street, all built in the early 1900's, vary in character and in color. One, whose brick was painted a gray-blue, has a bright red door. At the corner, in the front yard—if I can call it that?—a tree bends, Bonsai-like. Trash is perpetually piled up in front of another; I run past it when I walk Butter, pulling on his leash. I may have gotten used to the two tiny mice who live behind our oven, popping out, as if simply to say hello, when I prepare dinner, but I will *never* get used to rats. An older woman, always sitting on her stoop, walks toward me to double check that I am carrying a plastic bag to clean up after my dog.

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It's been over four months since Marcus and I moved into the ground floor apartment of the brownstone my college friend owns. Out the window, the sneakers hung onto the electrical wire sway with the wind. The aforementioned older woman says hello to me as I pass. She asks how "Lissa," my friend, is doing, though my friend's name is Malissa. The man a few doors away brings us leftovers, curry goat, shrimp scampi. We're convinced he's a part of the Sicilian mob. A new neighbor—her daughter is going to law school at my alma mater—passes and asks if we like radishes. She just picked

some up from the community garden down the street—tells me how to cook them. Her eyes shine; it doesn't matter that a mask hangs at her chin. She beams. I try to mimic this beaming, but sometimes I feel utterly locked in, trapped in our little apartment, as I grade never-ending assignments that I—for some reason—have assigned my University of North Carolina students, whom I teach remotely. When I open my front door for Butter's afternoon walk, I try to take it all in, the breeze, the collection of golden to red leaves scattered along the sidewalk. I try to smile. I try to ask people their names. Today, I met a new neighbor. "There's my little buddy!" he said of Butter, who danced around too excited to get nearer to him for "a good neck rub," as my father calls what he offers Butter when I drive home for a day or two. Yesterday, as I took a little plant out of my car, a neighbor was watching the sky turn purple with a friend, the wind become frenetic. He tried to tell me how to take care of the plant, but because I am completely inept at plant-caretaking I've forgotten everything he said.

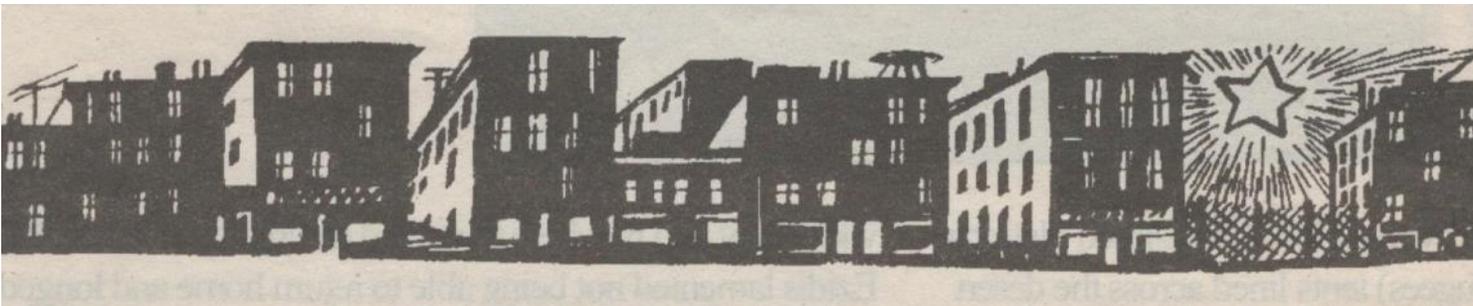
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Across the street, the group of teens—at least they look like teens to me—no longer gather. There was a shooting a couple months ago. The first, my friend said, since she moved to the block several years ago. In Midtown, where Marcus and I accompanied a few people as part of a group called "Stop the Sweeps!" the streets are empty of cars. At least emptier than I've ever seen them. I spoke to a man asking for change in front of a McDonalds. He said when he's lying on the sidewalk with nothing but a blanket, people don't even look at him. It's like he's not even there. I couldn't keep to the questions about cops. "Do they use aggressive language?" I said, or something like that, and he just looked at me. He was tired of my questions. He wanted to talk. To tell me he would not be going out to the island where they have all the shelters. "It's a step away from Riker's," he said. "I'm not going back to jail. That's why I don't mess with the cops. I don't want to give them an opportunity." I thought of Anna's advice years ago, when she told me about the gift of listening. Sometimes that's all you can offer. I had only filled out a fourth of the survey on sweeps, but I'd learned much more. "Thank you for listening," he said. "Sometimes I don't want money or food. Sometimes I just want to vent." Another man, jittery, dancing on his tiptoes, whom our companion surveyed, opened a little suitcase and asked us if we wanted any. It was filled with candy.

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My heart breaks for the city, for the people who've died during this pandemic, for their families, for people who are street homeless and in shelters and for those who, when passing street homeless people, are unsure about their own housing security. But I'm so glad to be here. Where neighbors become friends, become family. Where everyone knows Butter's name. The Lord is, indeed, in New York City, and I see her every day.

– Kristen



Rita Corbin

## JOSSY EYRE

[Editor's note: Jossy was a live-in worker at the Denver CW in 2003-4, when she was in her 70's. She died of COVID in a nursing home on April 20, 2020, at age 89. Anna was asked by her family to share memories of Jossy at her memorial service.]

Dear, dear Jossy – we have met in many places over the years! First at the Coalition for the Homeless, where you were on the staff and I was on the founding board. I think we had differing ideas about the purpose of the Coalition. You favored services and the provision of housing, and I thought the organization should focus on advocacy. I must say that I think that your idea prevailed, and I have deep gratitude for the Coalition's provision of many housing units for the homeless as well as an excellent health care facility in the Stout Street Clinic.



The next place we met was at the Gathering Place, founded by our friend Kathy Carfrae. It was there that you showed us that you were an Entrepreneur Extraordinaire by founding the Women's Bean Project, where so many women have been trained to enter the work force and have managed to remain there. Under your leadership the project flourished, moved to a new location and to this day thrives.

Your home on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue was a great meeting place for multiple purposes such as fund-raisers, meetings and parties. You were always a gracious hostess and generous with the resource of your home.

Rain or shine, you would show up for demonstrations focused on peace and other justice issues.



A huge gift came when you decided to live at the Worker for a year. You brought such love and caring to our home! I remember when Tina Stein was dying, I told her not to worry about her husband, Doug, and that we would take care of him. After Tina died I sort of lost track of Doug, but you went out looking for him, found him and brought him to the CW house, where he lived with us until he died.

Then came Loretto. You became a co-member sixteen years ago, and we were able to share deeply as you engaged Loretto life. We went to D.C. on a Loretto Peace Train, and it was on that train that you shared with the group your struggle with the Nazi invasion of your country and home and the long time after that that it took for you to embrace non-violence.

I remember another time when we shared a retreat in Santa Cruz. It was a day with a chill in the air, and you went straight to the ocean for a swim. It was then when I admired the strong, Nordic woman in you.

We shared a gospel group which met at Loretto Heights,

and you would pick me up and we would go there together. The gospel group was wonderful, but the drive a bit harrowing!

You engaged Loretto life fully and enthusiastically, and we came to love you.

You have been a wonderful companion along the way, and I treasure your fierce faithfulness, your kind acts, your loving ways, your strength and determination. We are truly blessed that you decided to spend a year at our house, and we will be forever grateful.

May you rest in peace.

– Anna

## BELOVED COMMUNITY VILLAGE

It's been a year since the Beloved Tiny House Community moved into the Globeville neighborhood in Denver. There were 11 tiny houses that moved in, and with additional space in the new property the city granted permission to build 8 more tiny homes to further house more people. The new community space, with a large kitchen and 3 bathrooms with showers, has been a big blessing to the Beloved Community. Here people cook and share meals together as well as have community meetings.

Living in and sharing community space has its challenges, but the community has been learning to get past differences and live more in harmony together. It is in the challenges that we learn and grow and develop true and lasting friendships. Having a place to call home and a community to grow with makes the biggest difference in living and growing as a human being.

I would like to thank Cole and the Colorado Village Collaborative, the Colorado Interfaith Alliance, and my friends at the Denver Catholic Worker (through whom I learned about the Beloved Community Village and became a volunteer when the new 8 houses were being built and have become a current resident) for all the hard work they do to help restore dignity to people by providing a place to heal and learn to live again.

We look forward to the Women's Village opening soon and to Safe Outdoor Spaces. There is definitely much joy in serving our brothers and sisters in need, as it is through serving others that we serve God. As we build more homes for others to live in and heal and restore their dignity as children of God, may we remember to also build a home for God in our heart, where the real revolution takes place, and through where God will reign on earth as he does in heaven.

Infinite blessings.

– Robert Vazquez



TAG ART MEMORIAL ON BRIGHTON BLVD

These spectacular portraits by Gamma, which cover most of a block-long warehouse wall at 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue, are a memorial to tag artists who have died. The graffiti is an invited part of the tribute.





## BLACK LIKE ME

No, i'm not John Howard Griffin (a white man who dyed his skin black in order to experience the segregated south in 1959 and then wrote the above book). I'm no kind of an expert on race relations and haven't even been particularly outspoken about it. I'm just an ordinary, white, middle class American who's always known in her heart of hearts that all people are created equal. More, every single one of us human beings is created *in the image of God*. Obviously, God's image has nothing to do with physicality, much less with superficialities like skin color. I've just read an article about Ruby Bridges (above), the first child to integrate a southern elementary school, now a vibrant and caring activist, and I'm sitting here thinking what an utterly absurd, surrealistic – not to mention unconscionable – concept it is that skin color could somehow *mean* anything. So i guess it's time i spoke out.

When i was three, my family moved into a brand-new cooperative community created by folks of my parents' generation who'd come through World War II – some of them as soldiers and some as conscientious objectors – convinced that the way to world peace was to live the kind of life that, as the founder of Quakerism, George Fox, said, “took away the occasion of all wars.” We were the second family to build, and others arrived gradually. When i was five and a few weeks into kindergarten, a new family moved in just down the hill from us. My mother suggested i help Paula feel welcome by showing her around the school. I was so proud to have this responsibility and to show off my beautiful new friend to the other children! It didn't last long because Paula had completed kindergarten a year early in New York City and was soon moved up to first grade.

But she and her family remained our neighbors long past childhood. All of them were beautiful people in every way. Her mother was a medical doctor and psychiatrist, always exquisitely poised, gracious and kind. Her father was a big, jolly, warm, friendly, generous and welcoming man, sort of like Santa Claus. He was, as i remember, a superintendent of schools in New York City and at one time head of the Episcopal Church in America. Paula went to the same college i did, still a year ahead of me. Her sister Sarah became a well-known educator and her brother Chuck a Stanford-educated lawyer. The only physical difference i noticed between this family and all the others i knew was that Chuck mysteriously couldn't float in a swimming pool; he did everything right and sank to the bottom.

Seventh grade in our school district took me to a school located beyond what must have been a sort of protected bubble for me. Fellow students soon showed me there was a category called “skin color” that separated people. I saw it for the first time. I wish i never had. I can't completely recover the innocence of color-blindness. But i will never lose my tremendous respect and admiration for my exemplary neighbors down the hill.

There were other African-Americans in my life, friends and elders, in my community, among Quakers and at college. And then there was Martin Luther King, Jr. I had been raised not only in the incredibly loving embrace of my family and community, but also in the commitment to pacifism and international brother/sisterhood of our Quaker meeting. Martin Luther King was a more powerful role model for all the deepest beliefs of my heart and soul than anyone else i knew or knew of. He still is. I was excited and uplifted by the unfolding history of his campaign for



human rights as it was happening, and i remember the tragedy and sorrow of his assassination. I never needed to *learn* that skin color is irrelevant.

I haven't particularly tried to explore the depths of the sinfulness and ignorance, arrogance, fear and greed that started our white ancestors way back when down the path of persecuting other races. But i have tried to learn, to feel, to get some kind of gut appreciation for what our black (Negro, colored, African-American, as the politically correct term has changed during my lifetime) brothers and sisters have endured in all the years of their oppression in this country. Mostly, i've read, and often reread, a lot of African-American authors: journalists and activists and educators, novelists and poets: Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Angela Davis, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston. There are many i haven't read. But i'm beginning to get an inkling of a feeling of what it's like to be always prejudged as inferior (or worse, as less than human), to be always discriminated against, always denied respect and opportunity, always shut out, shut down, stepped on, not listened to, not believed, not counted, and worse: to be actively attacked, harassed, jailed, tortured and killed for no reason but the fear and hatred of the attacker. That huge numbers of these relentlessly oppressed people have nonetheless remained human, remained willing to love and forgive and keep hanging in there in the poisoned atmosphere of this country's ongoing racism, is an awesome witness to the power and victory of the truly human spirit.

One conversation from John Griffin's *Black Like Me* has rung in my memory for all the decades since i first read it. A dignified black elder who'd offered Griffin hospitality in his poor, rural home spoke about how important it was for their race to keep on loving. "We musn't let the white folks drag us down to their level," he said.

– Jennifer

TIM JACK HARRISON  
by Michelle



THE WILD BEARS' WILDERNESS

The acts of mankind – women, omen, men, and boys – affect all interactions of living things in this world of life.



The wild bears and many others go unthought of. It's known that many things people have done have caused avalanches, fires, rains. Waves of destruction come to their places of raising their wild young.

They generally just watch over them in a play area that their partner found safe for them to live and play in, to have a safe way to the future too.

Now there are no fish, shrubs, bees of plenty, worms and grubs to eat because of all this.

The wild bear has no home to live in now. Where did the wilderness disappear to before all their eyes?

– Michelle

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We're all healthy here at the Denver CW, and are so grateful for all your prayers and support. If you'd like to receive this newsletter by email, please let us know at [denvercatholicworker@gmail.com](mailto:denvercatholicworker@gmail.com)  
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