HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

SAFE, AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

PATTY CARMODY - GENERAL JEFF PAGE  R.I.P. - p.2
The City of Los Angeles is currently determining the fate of affordable housing in the downtown area. The central question is: Will all strata of community be part of the Community Plan, and gain access to housing as a human right, or only those whose property ownership grants them such rights?

Since 2013, a faithful contingent of Skid Row activists, advocates, and residents have been coming together to ensure Los Angeles’ efforts to rezone downtown L.A. do not dispose of the Skid Row community, which has been the drain of many investors and developers for decades. In participating, the L.A. Catholic Worker has had the chance to join this brilliant and dedicated community—the Skid Row Now and 2040 Coalition in learning Skid Row’s history as well as the complexities of city codes and land use processes so as to ensure those who have long made Skid Row their home are prioritized.

The following is an excerpt from Catherine Gudis’ soon-to-be-published paper, Containment and Community: A White Paper on the History of Skid Row and its Role in the Downtown Community Plan. We aim to publish more from this paper and about our work in the next Agitator, but invite you to learn more at our coalition’s website: www.lapovertydept.org/skid-row-now-and-2040

By CATHERINE GUIDIS

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Skid Row is not going to go away by praying over it, or wishing it away, or even by physically destroying it; there must be a comprehensive program…There must be firm commitments on the part of the City, County, and CRA [Community Redevelopment Agency].

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By MARTHA SCARBROUGH-LEWIS

Patty first encountered The Catholic Worker newspaper in the home of her husband’s parents as a young bride, and she was hooked. A few years later as a suburban mother of young children she hosted Annonn Hannah on a speaking tour in her town in the Pacific Northwest. She kept the Catholic Worker in her heart throughout the years through moves, which eventually brought the Carmody family to Santa Clara, California. Shortly after her husband’s death, Patty signed up for the summer program at the L.A.C.W., and enjoyed it so much she repeated the experience the following year. After her retirement she joined the community as a part-time community member. But make no mistake. Patty was a full-time giver. She really loved the people at the Hippie Kitchen in the same unconditional and affirming way she loved her community members.

Her home in Santa Clara became a warm and peaceful sanctuary, filled with music and the smells of delicious food for so many Catholic Worker community members. She introduced us to her wonderful house filled with art and good books. She was part of a book club until just before her passing. And she prayed for all of us, that we could overcome. And that the Kingdom of God would come. Her passing leaves a tremendous hole for many people, but we do know that she is with us in spirit.

PATTY CARMODY - PRESENTE!

GENERAL JEFF PAGE - R.I.P.

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

Kid Row has lost a beloved community leader and activist with the passing of General Jeff (Pagé), who passed away on October 21, 2021 due to heart issues.

General Jeff (whose name refers to his tendency to tackle any problem, like high-ranking military commanders do) was a fierce leader in the fight for housing and services for L.A. Skid Row population. He was also known as the unofficial mayor of Skid Row.

In the 80s and 90s, General Jeff was involved in the hip-hop scene, most notably as a producer, deejay, background voice, a publicist manager, and a bodyguard, and he also did some writing.

In 2006, he ran into hard times and moved to Skid Row and became an activist, advocating for improving city policies towards the unhoused. In 2008, he started the Skid Row Neighborhood Council, where he served for six years, often coming into conflict with business leaders and Downtown residents trying to bring Skid Row downtown. General Jeff was defeated in his campaign for a fourth term in 2014. He then attempted to form the Skid Row Neighborhood Council that was later defeated by downtown voters.

He and another Skid Row resident launched the Bulletin of Skid Row residents, a paradigm shift asking Skid Row residents to reclaim their section of the city as a functioning neighborhood, rather than a containment zone. By offering more activities, the Creative Movement provided alternatives to drugs and other undesirable activities. They also started a campaign to clean the streets and get broken streetlights repaired.

General Jeff served on the California Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee where he spoke on behalf of Skid Row residents, and he served on the L.A. County Integrated Advisory Board and chaired a subcommittee on homelessness. He also created the very popular “3 on 3 Basketball Tournament” in Glady’s Park, and in 2012 he organized the Occupy Skid Row Music Festival with Public Enemy as the headliner. The event brought more public awareness to homeless issues and it was held outside our soup kitchen.

Jeff also won a lawsuit filed against him by the LAPD that he believed was a conspiracy by the department due to his activism for the unhoused and Black Lives Matter.

Through his efforts, he became one of the loudest and most recognizable voices for a population that is one of the most oppressed and often goes unrecognized. His legacy will endure in the ongoing fight for justice and dignity for unhoused people. He is sorely missed.

GENERAL JEFF - PRESENTE!

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

By DEMETRIUS MARTIN

I met Jesse in 1998 at Gladys Park, when I first came to L.A. We became friends, you know, playing chess and whatnot. Jesse soon joined the community. He asked me to come on Sundays and help him do coffee at the Hippie Kitchen. But during that time, I was going through something, pretty much living in a box. But being around Jesse, and with people in the garden, listening to good people, that box started to open a little bit. Later in the evening at the coffee zone, Jesse would come to me and joke with me about people asking me, could I talk? I was always quiet. Eventually, the box started to open wide. I started communicating with people, so Jesse was a big part of that.

I spent many long hours with him. We talked about different things, and life in general, because I was going through a lot. You know, I locked myself in a box over the years and shut the world out. But I really appreciate Jesse being there for me, reaching out.

You know, I will be forever grateful. I miss him, you know, Jesse. He became a big part of my life, I am also grateful for that.

I guess the garden has become a big part of my life because that is actually when I started to live, really accepting people. This is why I spent so much time down there. Matt, Susan, Jan always asked me, “When are you gonna take some time off?” Being in the garden is my time off, that is my own quiet space, you know, a chance to get away from it all and think. So it is my time off.

Thank you all for letting me share this. Miss Martha, best of luck to you. He had to be the happiest man in the world to have you by his side. I really loved him.

Demetrious Martin is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member.

CELEBRANT’S FLAME

Book Review: “Celebrant’s Flame: Daniel Berrigan in Memory and Reflection” By Bill Wylie-Kellermann

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

I just when it was thought that everything that could possibly be said about and by Daniel Berrigan was already published, Bill Wylie-Kellermann believed otherwise and wrote yet another excellent book, “Celebrant’s Flame” which has a Forward by Dan’s niece, Frida Berrigan, and an Afterword by Kateri Bouchard. Bill Wylie-Kellermann is a Catholic Worker in Detroit, where Bill has been involved for decades. At the outset, I maintain that if you are looking for that personal story of someone who formed his beliefs with one of our modern-day prophets, an insightful look into the religious community of one of the most holy and profound human beings in modern history that was Dan Berrigan, I bet this book you will enjoy and treasure.

Continued on page 6
ANOTHER WAY

benefits. That rejects immoral and employment with living wages and superior education, and meaningful children from the oppressor's hand. pressed, and saves the impoverished judgment. That defends the op-

press and that we too, as Christians, must another way, would live and teach. The implication Kingdom this newborn king of the Jews is the exact opposite of God's eternal hardhearted, cruel, and vindictive, Herod's imperial ruthlessness, so that to travel by years and younger in Bethlehem for being deceived by the Magi, and Jesus to Egypt, for Herod was livid received a message in a dream to go their gifts and paid homage to this newborn king, who was born in meek- ness. They then received a message in a dream not to return to Herod, as he required, so they departed for their country by another way. The following passages in Matthew’s gospel reveal that Joseph, too, received a message in a dream to go another way—this time with Mary and Jesus to Egypt, for Herod was livid for being deceived by the Magi, and ordered the massacre of all boys two years and younger in Bethlehem and nearby areas. They were to travel by another way to escape Herod’s imperial ruthlessness, so that another way could later be established and revealed by Jesus. Not so strangely, all empires over

capitalism and the economic in-

equality it generates. That places the utmost priority on the common good over military preeminence, nuclear weapons, corporate greed, and tax cuts for the rich. Makes reparations for the wrong done to others. And places the climate emergency and subsequent catastrophes as preemi-
nent priorities. Yes, these, and more, are another way of living—God’s way. Therefore, if YHWH’s primary characteris-
tics are justice (midathem) and right-

eousness (qadash), that permeate the Psalm (and other parts of the Bible), should we not, as believers in this newborn king of the Jews, the Prince of Peace, also promote and uphold justice, righteousness, and peace-

making as our way in this nation? Epiphany is a prompt, a reminder that our responsibility is to turn to-ward righteousness and to strategically choose another way—the way YHWH set forth, the way Jesus taught, including becoming a peacemaker, a mandate of our faith, and seek and rely on the Spirit for the wisdom, guidance, and the strength to move forward. We are not alone. YHWH promises grace, wisdom, guidance, and the the grace, wisdom, guidance, and the the heart of Los Angeles. Each worker that hangs on to their job, education and training is very intimate. Not only are these workers fighting for wages that will allow these workers to live with dignity in Los An-
geles, but they are also fighting for sustainable systems that will work for all Angelenos, especially those in the overlooked and unheard. These workers spearheaded a return-to-work law that requires hospitality employers to offer reemploy-

ment when the pandemic subsides after a disastrous year. These workers have faced the struggles for fair and equitable long-term housing and jobs as our city gears up for a 2028 Olympic Games. We are preparing to can a law that requires hotel developers to tear down temporary housing to replace every lost unit. Being a human entities us to hous-

ing. But more than that, being a hu-

man being is about where you find your home. How can you flourish when you spend too many hours driving to and from work? How can you flourish when you have to live on top of your family with little space to spread your wings? We must get our unhoused neighbors into safe and dignified housing. These workers, like the rest of us, surely will be too.

Hannah Petersen lives with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and works as an organizer with Unite HERE Local 11.

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

THE SEARCH FOR SUSTAINED HOUSING

By HANNAH PETERSEN

live around downtown Los Angeles and look up to see the high-rises of luxury units that sit vacant, and then look down at the Angelenos who sleep on the streets outside these units. This inhumane and senseless reality makes it obvious that we must invest energy and attention into the housing needs of our unhoused neighbors. But their housing needs are just the tip of the iceberg of a deeper prob-

lem: there is not enough affordable housing in L.A. for too many. Workers are one of the many communities impacted by the lack of affordable housing. These are the people who clean the city’s high-rises, stock our stores, cook and serve our food, and upkeep the homes of families like mine. It sadly requires us to begin to recog-
nize that these folks are essential to keeping our society running and our families alive. But do we have any idea what their lives look like outside of this work? My pandemic experience has included getting to know just some of the many workers of Los Angeles, putting names and faces to the stories I had heard and the statistics that broke my heart.

Tomás, a cook, handicapped from multiple workplace accidents, lives in a walk-in closet in the Pico Union area. Roberto, a busser, has a living room that doubles as the bedroom for his five children in Koreatown. Sara, a room attendant, works two full-time jobs since the death of her husband. She shares a room with her mother and replaced the dining room table with a bed for her son in Filipinotown.

While some workers hang on to their L.A. housing by a shoestring, others have been pushed out by rising rents, stagnant wages, and the hope for more dignified work. This ex-

perience, though, comes with a cost. Joseph, a gardener, lives in a beauti-
tiful home - thanks to the generosity of Habitat for Humanity - that he could only afford to buy in Lynwood where he commutes two hours to and from work by bus each day. Monica, a room attendant, lives two hours east of Los Angeles in a mobile home park at the base of the mountains and makes the same bumper-to-bumper commute each morning alongside the other invisible workers that keep this city running. Willy, a bellman, worked two jobs for decades to buy a home with a yard. He could only afford to buy in Palmdale, more than 60 miles from the heart of Los Angeles. Mimi, a room attendant, takes the train from her spacious Palmdale house to downtown Los Angeles, then backtracks 15 miles on a dif-

ferent rail, and ends walking the last stretch to work. Luis, a bartender, spends the week-
nights sleeping in his car near work because the home he can afford for his family of four is cheaper than 100 miles away in Adelanto. Roberto and Sara are forced to live in cramped Creampods that do not offer their families space to flourish in exchange for a shorter commute and access to the resources only a few blocks away.

Joseph, Monica, Willy, Mimi, and Luis each sacrifice over 45 days, if not more, for a little more space for their families. They have faced the struggles for fair and human right, these workers sacrifice (yet deserve) so much more. A roof alone does not guarantee time with loved ones, investment in your community, and opportunities to rev-

er. As an organizer, most of my day is spent driving to these homes and getting to know their inhabitants. Feeling only a taste of solidarity on these drives, I look to my hous-

ing experiences in L.A. As a white family with two union-incomes, my family was able to buy a house (with two yards) in the heart of the city. Even the most shocked and surprised, by the different pressures and stresses facing these workers compared to what my family encoun-

tered. Yet I find hope in the midst of it all. Not only are these workers fighting for wages that will allow these workers to live with dignity in Los An-
geles, but they are also fighting for sustainable systems that will work for all Angelenos, especially those in the overlooked and unheard.

These workers spearheaded a return-to-work law that requires hospitality employers to offer reemploy-

ment when the pandemic subsides after a disastrous year. These workers have faced the struggles for fair and equitable long-term housing and jobs as our city gears up for a 2028 Olympic Games. We are preparing to can a law that requires hotel developers to tear down temporary housing to replace every lost unit. Being a human entities us to hous-

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man being is about where you find your home. How can you flourish when you spend too many hours driving to and from work? How can you flourish when you have to live on top of your family with little space to spread your wings? We must get our unhoused neighbors into safe and dignified housing because when the least of these are housed in dignity, these workers, like the rest of us, surely will be too.

Hannah Petersen lives with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and works as an organizer with Unite HERE Local 11.

MISSION PROJECT UPDATE

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

Adoration of the Magi courtesy of Conception Abbey

MISSION PROJECT UPDATE

The number of homeless veterans in California continues to rise. The San Gabriel Mission has been working to provide support and resources to these individuals. With the support of local organizations and community members, the Mission has been able to assist many veterans in finding housing, employment, and access to medical care.

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

the millennia bear out Herod-like per-

sions: fearful, self-seeking, rapacious, hardhearted, cruel, and vindictive, among other qualities. This is what worldly imperial rule is about. Which is the exact opposite of God’s eternal empire, the nonviolent and merciful Kio-don this newborn king of the Jews would live and teach. The implication being, as the Magi and Holy Family demonstrate, there is another way, and that we too, as Christians, must also opt for it in the midst of empire. Psalm 72 is a prayer for such leadership, for such a nation, and to its God, its Saviour, A nation, and its leader, that upholds justice and right judgment. That defends the op-

pressed, and sees the impoverished children from the oppressor’s hand. That welcomes the stranger, rescues the poor when they cry out, and will do whatever necessary to provide housing for the sick, para-

nental healthcare, quality childcare, superior education, and meaningful employment with living wages and benefits. That rejects immoral and

By MIKE WISNIEWSKI

CATHOLIC AGITATOR / 3

screens of faces gathered for the first virtual session in our Reckoning with Our Mission Histories series. Guided by the insights of Ched Myers and Elaine Ems, participants had the chance to begin what we hope will be a long process of reflection and action in addressing the legacies of the California Mission system.

Specifically in this first session (Healing Haunted Histories: How Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

CATHOLIC AGITATOR / 3

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Mission project update

For those intrigued by our attempt to dig into a more complicated California Mission and contextual history, and challenge the Archdiocese of Los Angeles’ San Gabriel Mission 250th Anniversary Jubilee Year celebration, here is a brief update on where things stand.

On November 21, during Native American Heritage Month, about 50
When I last wrote, the number of unhoused individuals in Los Angeles city was 36,300; today that number has increased to 41,290 (and it may even be higher because the 2021 count was cancelled due to COVID).

According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the Los Angeles homeless population is overwhelming. In order to address the lack of affordable housing, and at the same time, 227 people are pushed into homelessness since 2019.

Miguel Santana, chair of the Housing Responsibility Board (HRB), said, "We need to address the housing crisis, and the HRB has an important role to play."

The HRB is responsible for setting the policy and strategy for housing development in Los Angeles. It is made up of 11 members, including one representative each from the City Council, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Affordable Housing Collaborative (AHC). The HRB also has 10 additional members, appointed by the Mayor, who represent various sectors of the housing industry.

The HRB meets on a quarterly basis to discuss housing issues and make decisions on projects. At its most recent meeting on March 6, 2022, the HRB discussed the future of the Skid Row project and approved a new plan for the development of affordable housing in the area.

The city of Los Angeles has made a commitment to ending homelessness by the year 2022. However, the number of unhoused individuals continues to increase, and the city is struggling to meet this goal.

The HRB's recent decision to approve a new plan for the development of affordable housing in Skid Row is a positive step towards ending homelessness. It is hoped that this new plan will provide much-needed housing for the unhoused individuals in the area.

In conclusion, the lack of affordable housing is a major issue in Los Angeles, and the HRB plays a crucial role in addressing this problem. The city must continue to work towards ending homelessness and providing safe and secure housing for all its residents.
Benny POOLE

I only had ten thousand more words to write. It was the last day, and I still write anyway.

Benny was born in Dublin, where he spent the majority of his adolescence. After graduating high school, he attended the prestigious University College Dublin, where he immersed himself into the study of psychology. After receiving a Master's degree, he decided to pursue a Ph.D. in the field.

After three months into his doctoral studies, he had a great realization: simply believing he had the answers to everything was a thing of the past. He had been talking with a friend who had introduced him to the Catholic Worker movement.

He wrote us a letter, and after a brief correspondence, he bought a plane ticket to Southern California for a chapter of life with the Los Angeles Catholic Worker. Upon his arrival at LAX he was greeted with a big sign and, as he recalls, an even bigger smile on the face of community member Dolores Carlos, who was holding it.

After arriving, he settled in here in Hemnacy House where he learned the ins and outs of daily life with 30 active community members. After roughly six months, he decided to move downtown to Zedakah House, where he lived for the next six months. For the next six months he would spend his community life and work on Skid Row with the people we serve.

HIS STORY cont’d from p.2

WISNIEWSKI cont’d from p.2

Den to Dan in 1973 when Dan publically spoke out against all sides in the Yom Kippur War and received heavy criticism and was ostracized for his comments. In the aftermath, Dan had asked his students, including Bill, why they did not make a public statement in his support. Bill learned from that incident that “Your voice matters. Speak up. Never too late to learn” (XX). Bill articulated further, “We can surely be formed and transformed by immersion in his (Dan’s) witness’” (XXI). How true this is. Taking action and speaking truth to power, as Dan eloquently exemplified—in his actions, statements, prose, and poetry—is a necessity in the midst of today’s diabolical madness, and an absolute imperative of our Christian faith.

There are many parts in the book in which Bill speaks profoundly about Dan. One example is when Dan was a fugitive after the 1980 Catonsville action and was invited by John Malpeade to stay at his place on Block Island, NY. That dwelling became home away from home for both Dan and later for Wylie-Kellerman (among others). To stay for two times Dan invited Bill over for relaxation, Bible study and contemplation, and partying. Another example is in the book’s first chapter as he explains, “My own conversion to gospel nonviolence came at Dan’s hand. Or at his word. Call it the witness of his life. And it precipitated a genuine crisis in me. He served in that period as something of a spiritual director to me and offered cold comfort: ‘You’re getting born and it’s bloody. It’s always bloody.’ Don’t have to wonder how he knew that. He is often called prophet or poet, or rightly so, but too rarely ‘apostle or evangelist’ of nonviolence. I venture to say that his life is an even, again in telling, which calls so many of us to radical discipleship (Deo Gratias) (4). I could not agree more.

Mike Wisniewski is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member and co-editor of the Agitator.

HARPER cont’d from p.3

Facing Our Mission Past Can Challenge the Conven- tion of Catholic Church Historians

By JED POOLE

By JED POOLE

It was in these places he worked in conjunction with refugees from around the world, counseling victims of torture before working in the countryside and providing shelter to refugees in the community known as “Catholic Missions.” There he would spend the next six years working as a part-time volunteer in the area of well-being with people with special needs.

Most recently he can be seen at his weekly march alongside the group Grandfather’s Against Racism. For the last 25 years, Benny has made his way back to the L.A.C.W. for one month every year, spending about a week at our sister house in Guadalupe and the rest of his time here at the L.A.C.W. He emphasizes the importance of this trip and how it is a crucial part of his life that he cherishes deeply. This time around it brought him to a presentation titled “Navigating the Landscape of Aging,” and for those who could not participate in his talk, he highly recommends Kathleen Dowling Singh’s book, Navigating the Grace of Aging.

Jed Poole is a Los Angeles Catholic Worker community member.

MALPEADE cont’d from p.5

2. Speculation tax, taxes the pur- chase and resale of real estate from being used as a commercial building or from an owner’s speculation tax in Vancouver, British Columbia, to curb property speculation and house flipping. The funds generated in this way go to support the development of housing for people living in temporary accommodations.

All of these policy possibilities are grounded in the goals and strategies expressed in the exhibition. Exhibition visitors get to choose mechanisms, policies and determine group political boundaries and then stack the dollars from each of their sources to reach the $3.5 billion. When they have done that, they have created a viable plan for housing 7000 People in Skid Row. Next: the hard work of getting the City Council to enact it. That is what Skid Row Now & 2040 is continuing to work on join us.

John Malpeade is the founder of the Los Angeles Catholic Agitator, and along with his partner Henriette Bourny, owns the Skid Row History Museum & Archives.

“We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it.”

Dorothea Day

6 / FEBRUARY/2022
On Sunday morning, as we were eating a breakfast of eggs and toast, I could not help but notice the way the light was filtering through the window, casting long shadows on the table. The peacefulness of the moment was interrupted by the abrupt knock at the door.

“Hello,” a voice called out, breaking the silence. It was a strange sound, one that I had not heard before.

“Hello,” I replied, my heart racing with excitement. “Come in.”

The door opened, and there stood a young woman, her eyes bright with happiness. She introduced herself as Jane, and I was immediately struck by her warmth and hospitality.

“I’m so glad you could come,” I said, offering her a seat at the table.

“Thank you,” she replied, sitting down opposite me. “I’ve been wanting to meet you for a long time.”

I could tell from her demeanor that she was someone special, someone who had a lot to offer the world.

“Tell me more about yourself,” I said, eager to learn more about this amazing woman.

She began to share her story, one that was filled with grace and beauty. She spoke of her work in the community, of the people she had helped, and of the joy she found in giving of herself.

“I believe in living a life of service,” she said, her voice filled with purpose. “And I believe in the power of love to change the world.”

I was taken aback by her words, and I knew that I wanted to learn more about this incredible woman. I offered her a place in my community, and she accepted with open arms.

From that day forward, Jane became a trusted confidante and a valued member of our group. She brought with her a sense of peace and a dedication to making the world a better place.

And so, my dear reader, I urge you to consider the power of love and service, and to open your heart to the possibilities that lie within. For it is only through our unity that we can truly make a difference in this world.
A HEARTFELT THANK-YOU

To everyone who sent us lovingly made hand-crocheted hats and scarves, sweatshirts, and sweat pants, canes, and many other thoughtful extras.

Please know that all of these beautiful gifts from your hearts are greatly appreciated by our kitchen guests who received them.

And a special thank-you to our supporters who sent us gifts anonymously. We received many packages with various items enclosed but no indication of who sent it. So, unfortunately, we cannot send a personal thank-you card, but please know how very grateful we are for your generosity, and continued support. Blessings.

SPECIAL NEEDS

We are in need of TARPS

Inexpensive disposable RAIN PONCHOS

Also, CANES—gently used or new, metal or wood.

And BACKPACKS—used or new. Thank you. Many blessings.

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