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# WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis

*Donna Wilhelm, Dorothy Pagosa, Maxine Smith, Marjorie White, Michele Richardson, Shannon Fox, Rose Grabowski, Rose Marie Bommer — Social Justice Committee*

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## Stirring the Pot: Yesterday and Today?

By Cecilia Marie Morton, SSJ-TOSF

Sometimes God uses us to help stir up the ingredients in the pot. If this didn't happen, whatever is in the pot might just turn into one big blob – no good to anyone. But, when the right ingredients are put together and stirred up, one can come up with something new and tasty. In growing up, little did I know that God would use me, an African-American, and other nationalities to stir up the pot.

People and things that were once never

important to us as a community and to our family members' lives were all of a sudden faced with the fact that it was time to stir up the pot so the new ingredients didn't burn. Are you hungry yet? Well, if you're following me you'll know that I'm not talking about food, but people.

By the way – new ingredients please stand up for a minute. Thank you!

I'm talking about people of different cultures and gifts.

People who want to share their own different cultures and gifts. People want to share their own different cultures and gifts within the Community with not only the Sisters, but with family members also – your family members. Until we learn to accept the cultures and qualities of all people, we can't REALLY and TRULY stand with them when they need us to understand and be there with us.

*Continued on pg. 2*

## SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCH

November 21 – 23, 2014

by Sister Dorothy Pagosa, SSJ-TOSF

From November 20-23, I attended the annual School of the Americas demonstration and conference. I had a role to play as a peacemaker and guide. On November 20 there was a training for those of us who would be peacemakers. Our purpose was to provide a calm presence to those who were attending the two days of action and workshops. If we needed to intervene it would merely be to let participants know their

rights and the commitments they had made to be a nonviolent presence at this event.

On November 21, many participants headed over to the Stewart Detention Center (45 minutes from Ft. Benning). Stewart is one of the largest detention centers to hold undocumented immigrants in the United States. Five people went on the

premises and were arrested for trespassing. They were trying to draw attention to the fact that we continue to criminalize those who cross our borders to escape increased violence in their own countries or because of economic deprivation caused by some of the trade agreements that our government has signed onto.

*Continued on pg. 2*

*When the American Indians say "walk a mile in my shoes" they have a point!*



## *Stirring. . . (continued from pg. 1)*

It would be foolish for us to think we will be accepted by everyone. I, for one, when I find myself in different situations, am reminded that there was once and still is a group of people who belong to the KKK. They were brought up from babies on to hate Black people and other nationalities.

Every time there was some event of importance in the group, their children were there and later they, too, were expected to become members of the Klan. With this kind of

thinking, it's not easy to put feelings aside and think this is different. I can deal with this even though they still hate Blacks. Put them in a bad situation with a gun or another weapon in their hands and what do you think will happen? Some would call it accidental and others defending themselves when HATE was really the root and cause of it all.

Sometimes I can't help wondering, do we ever stop to think why we said what we said or made that

statement or did what we did (when we left the person hanging out there all alone)? I ask myself these questions almost every day of my life when I think of the feelings of others and not my own – so as not to hurt those who seem to care less about my feelings.

When the American Indians say "walk a mile in my shoes" they have a point! Are we, too, a part of the problem? Racism is alive and well, not just in this country, but all over the world. ■

## SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCH ...

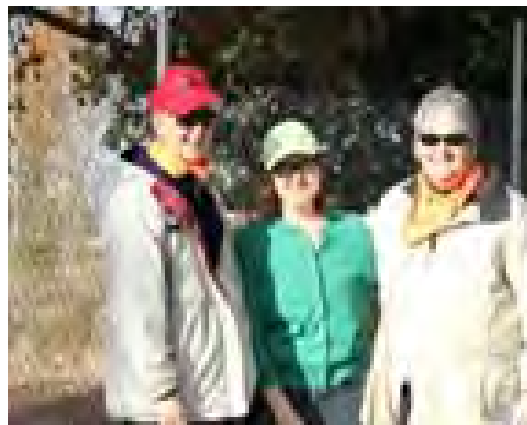
*(continued from pg. 1)*

Unfortunately I was unable to attend that demonstration due to being needed at the gates of Ft. Benning as a peacemaker for those not going to Stewart. On Saturday we heard the connections between the attitudes prevalent in the SOA and those being challenged in Ferguson, MO and throughout this country. We heard the need for comprehensive immigration reform. We heard how the School of the Americas is still impacting Latin and Central America. And we heard some wonderful music. That evening workshops were held about nonviolent direct action, economics, drone warfare, etc.

On Sunday, the rains came. That however did not dampen the spirits of

those in attendance for the yearly procession. This year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the murder of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador and the beginnings of SOA Watch. As a symbol of this time of mourning, black ribbons were tied to the fence leading into Ft. Benning and the School of the Americas. Two people got arrested for going on to the base.

Some have asked me, why do I keep going? It hasn't closed after all these years. Social Justice calls for us to keep chipping away at those systems that create injustice. This is one of those systems. We will continue to challenge it. ■



Sr. Dorothy at SOA Watch 2014

## WE FRANCISCANS: BUILD, EMPOWER, BOND, SPEAK

INTRODUCING THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE – SISTER DONNA WILHELM, SSJ-TOSF

Welcome to a new endeavor of the SSJ-TOSF Social Justice Committee! In it we hope to highlight the efforts of our Associates, Sisters, and Friends to create a more just world. We want to be a resource for our own continuing sensitivity and formation in areas of Social Justice. Finally, we seek your input in offering suggestions of topics, resource persons or groups who may be able to keep us updated in

various areas.

Each Social Justice Committee member has agreed to introduce herself and to speak about why she is committed to the work of the committee.

I suppose many of us could say that our commitment to put time and energy into “the needs of our times” began many years ago. For me, education provided my introduction into the

world of justice. A wise teacher once told me that “one of the most important outcomes of our efforts to teach others is that WE LEARN.”

I have loved learning from teenagers as a high school theology teacher. I have marveled at the depth and beauty and holiness of the African American community while ministering in a predominantly Black Catholic parish. ■

*“One of the most important outcomes of our efforts to teach others is that WE learn.”*



Sister Donna

I have been in awe and have been enriched in my own faith by the privilege of ministering with believers of faith traditions other than Christian.

And I am daily profoundly touched and stretched in the encounter with people who struggle with end of life issues and who trust me and those with whom I work as a hospice chaplain to join them in their journey to eternity. In each of these opportunities and encounters I have tried and have trusted that God has led me to offer my best gifts in each.

When I reflect on these experiences and how they have changed me I have come to believe that each

of us can contribute something to what we call Social Justice.

I have realized that I am really not “a *marcher*.” Some are and I admire them. My contribution comes more in “*relating and helping people to connect with those with whom they might not normally meet*.” I have “suggested,” “niggled,” and at times “boldly asked” in order to “understand the ‘other.’” At times I have been misunderstood and at others I have been lauded.

In all of these my inspiration has come from the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Yes, the Samaritan took a risk. Yes, he gave his resources to help another. And yes, he “took pity” on the other. What inspires me most in this Gospel challenge however, is none of these. The risk, sharing resources, and pity are admirable. The Samaritan’s response, the one that keeps me honest and continually converting is the fact that he

- **crossed the road!**
- **joined the injured person on *their side of the road!***
- **left his comfort zone to be with the “other” in his!**

A life challenge?  
Certainly! ■

## SSJ-TOSF: Social Justice Sightings



**sign-up  
SUBSCRIBE**  
ACTION ALERTS AND UPDATES  
CLICK HERE TO ENTER YOUR ADDRESS

- **Sisters Shannon Fox and Kim Mulhearn:**

Sighted tweeting about **SISTERHOOD: BECOMING NUNS** series on Lifetime TV.

To tweet:

[#thessjtosfsisterhood](https://twitter.com/thessjtosfsisterhood)

To watch

**SISTERHOOD:**

<http://mylt.tv/VfWn13>

- **Sister Dorothy Pagosa:**

Represented us at SOA Watch 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

- The “Haiti Group” at a Cleveland’s Blessed Trinity parish, including **Sister Francis**

**Therese**, is sponsoring a fun fundraiser for the group on Friday, Jan. 16, 2015 beginning at 6:30 PM. See Sr. Fran for tickets!



**2013 Haiti Fundraiser**

- **Sister Shannon Fox** had a role in a play In November entitled “Six Stories Up in Equality” that helped to raise consciousness about the experience of persons with disabilities.



- The **Cleveland Associates** and Sisters donated and packed toiletry bags for the Homeless Stand Down to be held in January.

Please send other “Sightings” to

[sisterbear@roadrunner.com](mailto:sisterbear@roadrunner.com)

BE INVOLVED! WE FRANCISCANS:  
BUILD, EMPOWER, BOND, SPEAK

1. **Stay up to date on Pope Francis:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/vatican>
2. **Read the document from the Synod on the Family:** <http://press.vatican.va>
3. **White Privilege Conference in St. Louis, MO:** <http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/>

If you are interested in attending and reporting back to us, please contact Sr. Donna Wilhelm with questions and for information.



**Theme: Resistance, Action, Courage, & Equity: The South Leading the Way!**

4. **Parliament of World Religions Gathering in Salt Lake City, UT in 2015:**  
<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/>. Would anyone like to join Sr. Judith Wood and Donna Wilhelm who plan to attend?




5. **Action Alert Digest by the Clinton Franciscans: Sign up for their email and action alerts at** <http://www.clintonfranciscans.com/news-and-events-take-action.html>
- 6.



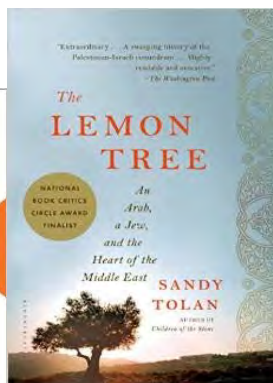
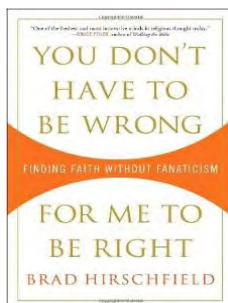
**Join the global compassion movement**

- Sign the Charter
- Join the Charter Community
- Find Resources

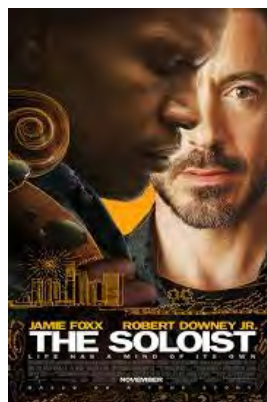
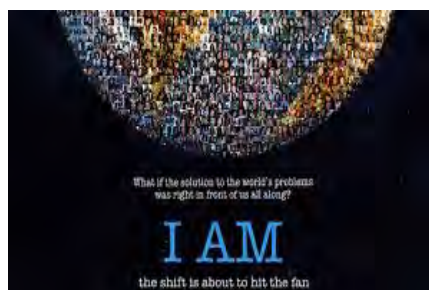
[charterforcompassion.org](http://charterforcompassion.org)

7. **NEW WAYS  Ministry**  
***Fear & Faith; Risk & Trust:*** A weekend conference for dialogue among lesbian sisters, congregational leaders, and formation & vocation ministers. June 5 – 7, 2015 at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, PA. Sponsored by New Ways Ministry. See brochure attached to this email for more information.

## 8. Read a Book



## 9. Watch a Film



## Remember!

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- "Sightings"
- Brief write-ups of your activities, "prototypes," suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

## ***You may be interested to know that:***

The Sisters and Associates of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis maintain memberships in the following organizations:

- ❖ Bread for the World: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org),
- ❖ Campaign for Better Health: [www.cbhconline.org](http://www.cbhconline.org),
- ❖ Franciscans International: <http://franciscansinternational.org>,
- ❖ Network: [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org),
- ❖ Pax Christi: [paxchristiusa.org](http://paxchristiusa.org),
- ❖ Southern Poverty Law Center: [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org),
- ❖ Project Irene: [icirr.org/content/project-irene](http://icirr.org/content/project-irene)