

Activists: In Solidarity with Protectors and Defenders

By the Newsletter Staff

Standing by Standing Rock

Indigenous tribes have been in a struggle to defeat pipelines which would carry oil across their lands, destroying the land, poisoning the water, and desecrating sacred sites. A victory was achieved when the Sandpiper pipeline was halted in Minnesota. But the struggle moved to North Dakota. It is seen not only as important for indigenous rights and environmental rights, but also as an opening for a new, clean energy future for generations going forward.



*A rally in support of Standing Rock took place in St. Paul on September 14. The non-Indian city councils of Minneapolis and St. Paul, along with Seattle, passed resolutions expressing solidarity with indigenous resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline. City Council members will travel personally to Standing Rock to present resolutions.
Photo: Ann Galloway*

Visiting the Camp of the Sacred Stones at Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota on August 26, peace activists/WAMM members Roger Cuthbertson and Jo Schubert explained why people were alarmed: “The construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline is about one mile from and roughly parallel to the northern border of the Standing Rock Reservation. This pipeline is being built to ship Bakken crude oil to Illinois. Just upstream from the Standing Rock Reservation a 30-inch pipe is planned to cross the Missouri River, buried under the stream bed. By the way, a pipeline to Illinois would have to cross the Mississippi, too. This pipe under the Missouri would be carrying as much as 450,000 barrels a day. Just how a buried pipe under a river could be safely monitored for wear and tear is hard for us to fathom.”

Not long after Roger and Jo left the camp, the private security firm hired by the Dakota Access pipeline set attack dogs on the peaceful defenders of water and land at Standing Rock and the dogs bit people in an action reminiscent of the dog attacks on black voting rights activists in Selma, Alabama in the nineteen-sixties.

A District Court judge ruled against the Oceti Sakown, or Standing Rock, tribe when it tried to halt construction, but the tribe saw a limited victory on September 9 when the U.S. federal administration in Washington, D.C. quickly stepped in and the Departments of Justice and the Interior, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ordered a temporary halt to construction of the pipeline beneath the Missouri River. Subsequently, the D.C. Court of Appeals called a temporary halt to construction on some more land.

However, construction of the pipeline continues on nearby land outside the legal restrictions. Peaceful water protectors set up the Red Warrior Camp and chained themselves to bulldozers. North Dakota Governor Dalrymple militarized the situation. Twenty to thirty different law enforcement agencies, some with automatic weapons, are on the scene, according to reports from the independent journalists of Unicorn Riot who were filming.

Winona LaDuke of Honor the Earth, who has taken up residence for the struggle, said the governor’s action to spend “over \$7.8 million militarizing the state to put down the Lakota and their allies” will not succeed.

Tribal Chairman David Archambault II of the Oceti Sakown, or Standing Rock Sioux, has said that “we must protect current and future generations that rely on our rivers and aquifers to live. We insist on peaceful action and have asked that those coming to join us in solidarity come in a peaceful, safe and prayerful manner.”

Thousands have joined the struggle on the ground, coming from near and far. Tribes from all over the U.S. and Canada have continued to gather peacefully at Standing Rock. The Seven Fires Council of Sioux, has come together here for the first time since 1867 when they defeated U.S. soldiers at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Some tribes, including Pacific Northwest tribes, arrived by canoe, entering at the Missouri

River and paddling for two days. Others come by horseback, car, truck, and even plane. The Sarayaku came from Ecuador, offering words of encouragement because they had been victorious in a similar struggle. And, though they may not physically travel to Standing Rock, supporters of all kinds from around the world stand in solidarity.

Giving an Assist to the Minnesota Lynx and BLM



WAMM members in an enthusiastic show of solidarity with the Minnesota Lynx women's professional basketball team and players who made a stand against racial profiling.

Photo: WAMM

To make a statement about racial profiling, some Minnesota Lynx women's basketball team members held a pre-game news conference and wore specially made T-shirts before their game with Dallas in Minneapolis last July. The front of the young women's shirts announced: "Change starts with us. Justice & accountability". On the back, the tshirts displayed the names of Alton Sterling, who was killed by a police officer in Dallas, and Philando Castile, who was stopped by police in a St. Paul suburb and shot to death while his girlfriend and her four-year-old daughter were with him in a car. The players' shirts also displayed the motto, "Black Lives Matter" and the Dallas Police Department logo. The young women said they meant to denounce the senseless ambush of Dallas police, as well, and pleaded for "change for us all."

All four off-duty policemen who were acting as security for the women's team walked off the job to protest what the players had done. According to the Star Tribune, the president of the Minneapolis Police Federation, the union representing police officers, made disparaging remarks about the women and said only four

police security had been on duty for the national professional championship-winning Lynx because it had “such a pathetic draw”. WAMM members were inspired to turn out in an enthusiastic show of solidarity with the Minnesota Lynx and their principled team members when they played Seattle on July 22 at a well-attended game.

Outside the Gates: Black Lives Matter



St. Paul neighborhood groups organized “Mondays at the Mansion”, vigils at the governor’s residence in memory of Philando Castle and the other Minnesotans killed by police in the last year: Jamar Clark, Marcus Golden, Michael Kirvelay.

Photo: Merriam Park Neighbors for Peace

Holding the Line with Minnesota Nurses



*WAMM nurses and activists hold the line in Minneapolis in the nurses' strike.
Photo: WAMM*

The Minnesota Nurses Association, part of the National Association of Registered Nurses, wants to provide good care for patients and needs their contract with Allina Health System hospitals to make this sustainable.

Does anyone in a hospital for injury, illness, or other medical needs want the facility to be so understaffed and overworked that it can't provide patient needs properly and safely? Having over extended, stressed out, financially insecure nurses lacking sufficient healthcare themselves does not make for a good situation. Overall, eroding the protection in nurses' contracts is part of an effort to erode and destroy unions in the U.S. But the union will keep them strong.

Teachers Stand Against Islamophobia in School



The FBI developed the interactive website, “Don’t Be a Puppet” for teenagers as part of its Countering Violent Extremism” (CVE) program, encouraging high school teachers across the United States to use it “as part of their educational efforts.” Civil liberties and Arab American and Muslim groups are alarmed that it gives the false impression that the exercise of certain First Amendment rights are a pathway to violent extremism, that it encourages teachers and students to report some students for engaging in protected expression and activities, and that it contributes to bias and bigotry. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has joined in objecting. AFT August 6 letter (excerpt) to FBI Director James Comey:

We are writing to express how deeply troubled we are by the FBI’s Don’t Be a Puppet policies targeting students and immigrant families. Public schools should be safe havens that embrace all students and families regardless of citizenship and national origin. They should instill civic pride, not fear and suspicion...The strength of the American public school system lies in its diversity and inclusion...The harmful effects of such a campaign cannot be overstated. Racial profiling is marginalizing and will take an emotional and psychological toll on innocent children. A Generation of children is growing up in fear due to the current hateful rhetoric in the public arena targeted at their families and communities. Efforts like Don’t Be a Puppet will only exacerbate the bullying and profiling of middle Eastern and Muslim students by creating a culture of animosity and distrust.”