



# The Hartford Catholic Worker

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St. Martin De Porres House  
St. Brigid House

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*"To Construct a New Society Within the Shell of the Old"*

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December 15., 2005

The Return

Jackie Allen-Doucot

It was very difficult to leave the community we had formed at the gate to Guantanamo. On Wednesday morning I was looking out the kitchen window of St. Martin House watching the snow and birds as the sun came up. I immediately thought of friends back at the gate whom I knew were still fasting. I knew that some had been up all night praying and keeping vigil; hoping that word might come through the Cuban checkpoint that the US military would allow us in.

There had already been so many little miracles that got us to the Cuban checkpoint, how could we stop believing in them now?

To be in my warm kitchen- already busy with kids off to school and chores to get ready for our Catholic Worker Christmas party for the kids in our tutoring program- felt like a split had been created in my heart. All day this followed a pattern. I would make press call and sort gifts; do a radio interview and write out invitations; call the families of my friends still witnessing in Cuba and come back to deal with toy donations.

At night, when I lay down to sleep and finally had a few moments to think and pray it dawned on me that this split occurs every day to every person in this country. As we go on our daily routine of work, kids, chores, meals, community life- a whole other reality is operating simultaneously. There are hidden places made by our tax dollars in different



corners of the world. In those places are human beings whose lives are suspended in hell. There is no day or night for those kept in cells with 24 hour fluorescent lighting. There is no rest for those who have rock music blasted into their cells all night and day. There is no mail call with word from home for those denied access to family. There is no work to prepare a defense in court for those who will never be allowed to face their accuser and present evidence that would release them. There is no hope for those who have rejected their endless imprisonment and are fasting to the death- and for these there is still no end because their tormentors have strapped them down and forced feeding tubes up their noses. While we scurry about the kidnapped and disappeared husbands and sons in Guantanamo are chained like dogs to a ring in the center of their cells.

If we were to be mindful constantly of this suffering and evil, a grace given to us ever so slightly during our long walk and fast, we would not be able to go on with our lives, with business as usual. But we are Americans with busy days, full bellies and comfortable life-styles and so we can create the split necessary in the human soul to separate our daily lives from the torture camps we have bought, paid for, and justify as just a part of the war on terror. The fact that our country no longer defends democratic principles and human rights, but violates them daily and by the hundreds. Perhaps if we had to wake up every morning and look out our kitchen window into a cell where a suffering man sat weeping- our souls would not be so split. We could not and would not go on with business as usual. Perhaps then the torture would stop.

Please go to the Amnesty International website to read accounts of the torture and suffering being carried out in your name. Moved by what you learn I implore you to take action today. If we know that hundreds of men, and some children, have been kidnapped and continue to be held and tortured by our government and we refuse to be moved, refuse to take action our nights will be haunted, our conscience compromised and our souls imperiled.