

# Activist Reports

## Standing Rock Sioux – NoDAPL, and other activities

Mary

The struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux against the Dakota Pipeline continues to be our major focus. On Oct. 26, we organized a protest at Senator Chuck Schumer's Manhattan office against the Spectra AIM pipeline and in alliance with the struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux. 250 people came together to stop the construction of a high pressure, fracked-gas pipeline that poses a major threat to more than 20 million people. After the rally & marching, fifteen people chose to be arrested by sitting & blocking the building entrances. Solidarity actions were also taking place in Peekskill, Rochester, Binghamton, Albany, Long Island, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Washington DC.



Oct. 27—BCJN joined together with folks from Marble Hill at a community association meeting, which was small as only a few folks turned out.

Oct. 28—A few of us went to a Columbia University event about the history and struggle of Native Americans with a particular focus on the struggle of the Standing Rock Sioux against the Dakota Access Pipeline. A diverse group of graduate students provided significant information about this history.



Nov. 2—Fordham University & Dorothy Day Students  
A group of Fordham University students who are part of a Dorothy Day campus organization reached out to work with us because they are concerned about food insecurity in the Bronx. They're organizing a forum on Nov. 29 to educate their peers about what is happening. One of the speakers is a Fordham professor who will speak about how "the US is characterized by abundant food for privileged citizens and "food deserts" for the historically marginalized". And the other speaker is Ray Figueroa, a significant ally of ours who leads Friends of Brook Park in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. He's done some amazing work in keeping youth out of prison through his Youth Community Farm Project, which provides alternatives to incarceration for young people. He also collaborates with the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) and the

Woodbourne Correctional Facility in upstate New York for the BPI College-in-Prison Program.

Nov. 10—Farmworkers Justice Fundraiser at the May Day Space in Brooklyn. A number of folks from BCJN went to this event to support their efforts on behalf of the farmworkers, a struggle that will continue.

Nov. 12—WEACT conference in Washington Heights, “ Urban Communities Organize for Climate Resilience Conference”, which involved many organizations so it was an important opportunity to reconnect with a number of folks we know, but its liberal approach dominated the event, making it’s impact pretty minimal. And the event’s structure provided limited discussions within small groups, not in the larger meeting.

Nov. 14—A meeting of activists at the Riverside church to prepare for our Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> protest at Foley Square in support of the Standing Rock Sioux provided significant preparation for the event, enabled people to organize ways in which they would be arrested, and to share responsibilities.



Nov. 15—Our demonstration was at the Jacob Javits Center because the Army Corp of Engineers is located in the Federal Building there. We drew about 2,000 people and had about 15 speakers, many of whom were Native American. After the speakers, there was Native American dancing & music, and then about 35 people decided they would get arrested. People were well organized, and folks went to the jails where the arrested were taken, but that took quite awhile

as they didn't let us know which jails. Posting this event on Facebook about a week ahead of the protest drew a huge number of people to this event.

Here are three links to photos from the NYC event.

<http://www.alamy.com/lightbox/viewlightbox.aspx?LB=1819741>

<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/dakota-pipeline-protests/scores-arrested-dakota-access-pipeline-protests-nationwide-n684531>

<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/dakota-pipeline-protests/scores-arrested-dakota-access-pipeline-protests-nationwide-n684531>

Nov. 17--A couple of us from BCJN went to a meeting of the NYC organizations that work with the People's Climate Movement nationally. About 35 folks representing about 30 local organizations were there, and it was interesting to see who was there and what concerns people had. BCJN proposed a motion making the Standing Rock Sioux struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline a primary focus, which passed unanimously. And now it will be taken to the national PCM.

## **Defending the Right to Vote**

Bill B.

On Election Day my wife, a neighbor and I volunteered as non-partisan poll monitors to ensure that people could exercise their right to vote. This wasn't a no-brainer because in addition to all the new laws restricting that right, Trump's calls for his own monitors took the vote suppression game to a whole new and threatening level. We worked through the Election Protection Project of Common Cause.

My wife and I were assigned a polling station in Central Harlem. Neither of us really expected a pro-Trump goon squad to show up, but I thought that someone like O'Keefe might turn up to try creating a Planned Parenthood/ACORN-like incident to record and circulate as 'evidence' of 'voter fraud'.



Fortunately, nothing of the kind happened either at our or our neighbor's assigned precinct. What we did wind up doing is answering election questions and helping a lot of people find on their phones the proper place for them to vote.

Although there were no incidents, activities like this may become more critical in future elections. This time it was fun. People expressed gratitude for our help.

Peace,  
Bill

P.S. In the interest of full disclosure, I cast a blank ballot.