



Community for creative non-violence

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27 December 1976

Dear friends,

On any given day, furniture may be seen piled high on the sidewalks of this city, a mute reminder that 2,260 evictions occurred in 1975. Not far from the White House, human beings huddle through the freezing nights on the heat gratings in front of the Corcoran Art Gallery. Clusters of the homeless can be seen hovering over fires in barrels or garbage cans. An occasional death by freezing may make the newspapers.

In April, we proposed to the city government that it place a large, RLA-owned abandoned building in a neighborhood land trust. The Community would rehabilitate the property and maintain it as an emergency shelter for evicted families. In June, the Department of Housing and Community Development responded negatively. In August, several members of the Community were arrested for unlawful entry when they tried on two separate occasions to enter the house and begin the work of rehabilitation. Since that time, there have been many meetings and discussions with city officials in an attempt to resolve the situation. A decision was promised by November 19. It was not forthcoming.

On December 9, in a letter to city officials, we shared our feelings and plans with them. On January 7, four of us "will set up cardboard boxes in front of City Hall, and that is where we will live until the campaign is ended. . . If we are not arrested, we will invite others to join us. If we are arrested, we will return to our 'homes' as soon as we are released. Once again we would invite others to join us. Other forms of witness and action would follow, some involving the possibility of arrest, some not. Those would be discerned as the campaign grows and matures. . . We will attempt to make visible and concrete what has been made invisible and abstract."

We hope that the enclosed brochure may address some of the questions that this letter leaves unanswered, but if any remain we would be more than happy to answer them personally. This letter is primarily an invitation, a call for help. We invite people to share some of their financial resources with us, since we are extremely short of funds. We invite people to join us in cardboard boxes, people who are not only willing to face arrest but are prepared to shed all of the privileges that normally accompany these kinds of encounters. People who would say no to special release programs, bail, and fines. People who are willing to admit their guilt and suffer the consequences. People with organizing skills and people who want to learn. People who are willing to work to build the Trust, talk to neighbors, and meet with church and civic groups. We need your ideas, criticisms, suggestions, and your prayers. Those are the needs, that is the invitation. Please join us in whatever way your conscience dictates.

Much love to you,

The Community for Creative Non-Violence