FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIVE RESISTANCE
Why We All Need to Stand With Standing Rock and Oppose the Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL)

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Over the Thanksgiving (or as some might say Thanks-taking) holiday I traveled to Standing Rock, ND to learn more about the latest indigenous struggle against the fossil fuel industrial complex and how Family Farm Defenders can best support this resistance. Thanks to the generosity of Equinox Community Farm near Waunakee, WI several hundred pounds of organic produce was also delivered to one of the communal kitchens within the Oceti Sakowin protest camp situated at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri Rivers. Coordinating this particular kitchen that weekend were Brian Yazzie, a Lakota activist from South Dakota, and Dan Cornelius, an Ojibwe activist from Wisconsin who works with the Intertribal Agricultural Council.

By late Nov. Oceti Sakowin Protest Camp had grown to almost 10,000 people, placing it among the largest “cities” in North Dakota. Many people first heard about the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) back in April when young tribal activists set up the protest camp in the direct path of the drill rigs hellbent for the Missouri River, but the Standing Rock Tribe has been formally opposed to this latest land grab ever since the 1854 treaty which the Sioux have long claimed as their territory under the 1854 Treaty. Of course, the “Black Snake” has its tentacles spread from Kalamazoo, MI to Whiting, IN, but the Standing Rock Sioux have now been arrested, including five more just two days after Freddie Gray’s death in Baltimore, police certainly do. In a state facing one fatality every two months - making it the most dangerous place to work in the U.S.

The toll of the fossil fuel violence is nonetheless heavy. Nearly 600 people have now been arrested, including five more just two days after Christmas, with many more brutalized by rubber bullets, tear gas, sound weapons, and even water hoses in below freezing conditions. The images of private security dogs attacking peaceful protesters and detainees being held in retrofitted dog kennels hearken back to centuries of racism and colonialism many had hoped we were beyond. One 21 year old protester from New York, Sophia Wilensky, nearly had her arm blown off by a police concussion grenade on Nov. 20th, and is now undergoing multiple operations at a Minneapolis hospital. An ambulance was delayed for hours trying to reach her due to police road blocks on the main public road to Standing Rock.

Of course, the “Black Snake” has few qualms about consuming its own. In the last decade an estimated 74 workers have died in the Bakken Oil Fields - on average about one fatality every two months - making it the most dangerous place to work in the U.S.

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