A Glimpse of What's Possible
It was an actual miracle that a portion of the Dakota Access Pipeline was halted by the Army Corps of Engineers. This miracle contains a recipe for the kind that we need to heal the planet. A miracle is a kind of a gift, an occurrence that is beyond our capacity to make happen.

It is something beyond the normal rules of cause and effect as we have understood them. These include the rules of political and economic power that determine what is practical and “realistic.” This portion of the pipeline was intended to pass through a lake on a Native American reservation with the potential to pollute their water supply. Native Americans have traditionally practiced a way of life that emanates from nature and when it is endangered they, and every other living organism, are as well. The Standing Rock
Sioux Tribe brought a lawsuit against the Army Corps of Engineers that alleged that the Corps violated multiple federal statutes, including the Clean Water Act, National Historic Protection Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act, when it issued the permits.

This decision sets an amazing precedent for defending our environment and clean water supply. Much closer to home, construction is underway for a $3.2 billion, 515-mile-long gas pipeline. The pipeline runs from central Alabama through southwestern Georgia, and into Florida going south into Osceola County just bypassing Orlando. The Sabal Trail Pipeline is a project of Duke Energy, NextEra Energy, and Spectra Energy. Although all federal permits for the pipeline construction are in place, a joint lawsuit filed by the Sierra Club, the Gulf Restoration Network, and Flint Riverkeeper has challenged that permitting process. There is opposition to the pipeline in the three states in which construction is occurring. The Sabal Trail Pipeline, also known as the Sinkhole Pipeline, threatens clean water supply and will damage our environment. As Sierra Club’s Michael Brune puts it, “It’s not a question if a pipeline will malfunction, but rather a question of when.”

The situation at Standing Rock is that of our whole planet. Everywhere dominating forces seek to exploit what remains of the treasures of earth and sea. The usual pattern has been one land grab after another, in which resistance has been futile. But at Standing Rock, something different happened. The whole planet is in need of similar miracles on a massive scale. Around the globe, powerful interests are destroying ecosystems and landscapes, clearcutting, strip mining, and polluting. In every case, the destroyers have more military, political, and financial power than those who would resist them. If this planet and our civilization are to heal, we need to exercise a kind of power that makes money less relevant and doesn’t reduce nature from a sacred, living intelligence into a collection of insensate things: mere resources to be exploited.

We must instead invite a change of heart by being in a place of heartfulness ourselves—of courage, empathy, and compassion. We too easily forget the sacred, whether in relationship to human beings or to non-humans like trees, soil, and rivers. Victory at Standing Rock will have far-reaching significance. It established an ideal- if it can happen at Standing Rock, why not globally? If a pipeline can be stopped against great odds in one place, similar violations can be stopped in every place. It will shift our view of what is possible.
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