

A grand jury indicted Reznicek in 2019 on nine federal criminal charges, including setting 11 fires. After her indictment, she expressed regret that she did not do more to try and stop the pipeline.

On February 6, 2021, Reznicek pleaded guilty to one count of Conspiracy to Damage an Energy Facility. Four months later, she was designated a domestic terrorist by the court and sentenced to eight years in prison, followed by three years supervised probation, and a restitution of \$3,198,512.70 paid to Energy Transfer LLC.

She reported to federal prison on August 11, 2021. She spent the next year working with her legal team to appeal her sentence and the use of the terrorism enhancement in her case. Unfortunately, on June 6th, 2022, the three Trump-appointed appeal judges hearing her case upheld her conviction, writing that even if the terrorism enhancement was misapplied, it was a “harmless error.” The terrorism enhancement increased Reznicek’s sentencing guidelines, giving the judge the ability to justify a sentencing of eight years versus the three years that her guidelines originally suggested she receive.

Jessica Reznicek has a deep love for nature, camping, swimming, hiking, theology, music,



gardening, laughter, and eco-sustainability. She is committed to self-discovery through deep relationships cultivated in intentional faith-based community living. Her love for the earth and all living things who rely on this planet led her to engage in actions of solidarity by targeting those who seek to harm and profit off of the poisoning of our planet.

If you wish to write Jessica, you can send letters to the following address:

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Jessica Reznicek

Catholic Worker and Water Protector Sentenced to Eight Years in Federal Prison



Jessica Reznicek is a Catholic Worker and climate activist convicted to eight years in federal prison for her involvement in actions against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Reznicek grew up in a small, rural town in Iowa where her father worked for the county sheriff’s department. After graduating high school, she worked as a forklift driver at a distribution center and took classes at the local community college. Her life changed after meeting her future husband while working another job at a country club. Her husband was a man of substantial wealth, who, according to Reznicek, introduced her to material resources and a lifestyle she had never previously known.

Soon after, she was attending Simpson College fulltime. Despite her access to material resources, her upbringing in a blue-collar community and her experiences at her college, she

became increasingly radicalized. Reznicek had already developed a strong connection with the environment. In her own words, she describes how from early on she grew close with the earth:

“To escape the dysfunction of my childhood, I survived by finding peace at the river. I fell in love with the water of the Raccoon River and came to regard her as a Mother. She nourished, nurtured, and sustained me. As I grew up, I would always go back to the Raccoon. But as time passed and industry expanded, I saw the river change. In less than 20 years, I saw her struggle and suffocate as foam and oil sheen covered her surface.”

One of her earliest actions of protest took place while traveling in Colorado during mid-2000’s. Reznicek decided to make an impromptu trip to revisit a tranquil area she enjoyed as a child.

Sadly, in replace of the babbling streams of her memories was a large swath of earth dug up by oil-and gas industry machinery. The locals complained that the polluted water would sometimes burst into flames. In response, Reznicek held a demonstration in protests of the destruction of the land for profit.

Reznicek returned to her life but remained forever changed by the experience. Her life changed in 2011 when a professor told her about the Occupy Wall Street movement taking place New York. Inspired by the growing movement, she packed her bags, leaving her life and marriage behind.

Reznicek took part in the occupation in Manhattan's Zucotti Park for several weeks, but returned to Iowa when a satellite protest sprung up in Des Moines. She befriended individuals active in the Catholic Workers movement while participating in the Des Moines Occupy

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camp. Reznicek had been raised catholic but was no longer practicing in her faith. However, with the constant presence of the Catholic Workers at demonstrations, the strong social-justice mission of the organization that aligned with her perspective, and the “nagging void, in her spiritual life, Reznicek soon joined up with the organization.

When the Occupy movement fizzled out, Reznicek moved into a Catholic Worker's house, named after Rachel Corrie, the American activist killed by an Israeli bulldozer while defending Palestinian home. Reznicek became fully committed to her new life. During an interview with Rolling Stone, she described the sudden shift in her life during the recent months:

“I abandoned without hesitation the routine that had strangled both my voice and my spirit. I left the house I had lived in for over five years and found my home,” she wrote. “I became liberated from the powerlessness and emptiness that accompanied the constant maintenance it required to function halfheartedly in the world of designer clothes and clammy handshakes. My decision to begin anew magnified the discontentment I had departed from and reminded me of the true meaning of my life: love and compassion.”

While active in the Catholic Workers' movement, she was introduced to the Plowshare movement, a sister movement that often engages in the destruction of military weaponry or occupies military bases in opposition to war. During the fall of 2015, Reznicek received a grant that she used to research defense contractors located in the Omaha area. She learned that Northrup Grumman was developing the RQ-4 Global Hawk – a drone that going to be exported around the world. In response to this new information, Reznicek took action two days after Christmas by smashing the window and door of the defense contractor's office before. In the Plowshare's tradition, she remained at the location to be arrested, kneeling on the sidewalk next to her sledgehammer and baseball bat. She dodged a 22-year prison term and served the entirety of her eventual 72-day sentence for trespassing and vandalism while awaiting trial.

In spring of 2016, Reznicek learned about the Dakota Access Pipeline. She traveled to the standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota, but soon returned home to stop the pipeline from being built in Iowa. She attended public comment hearings, gathered signatures for valid requests for Environmental Impact Statements, and partici-

pated in civil disobedience, hunger strikes, marches and rallies, boycotts, and encampments. During this period, she was arrested several times for locking herself to the construction equipment, blocking roads used by construction workers, etc.

In November 2016, Reznicek and fellow Catholic Worker Ruby Montoya burned a section of the pipeline at a worksite near Newell, Iowa. The two also set fire to machinery by lighting coffee cans filled with motor oil ablaze inside the cabs of the equipment. In May of 2017, Reznicek used oxyacetylene cutting torches and gasoline-soaked rags to destroy sections of the pipeline in Iowa and south Dakota. In July 2017, Reznicek and Montoya held a press conference where they confessed that they had sabotaged the pipeline over the last several years, creating over \$6 million in damage and stopping the flow of 30 million barrels of oil.

