

BLACK WOMEN'S AGENDA

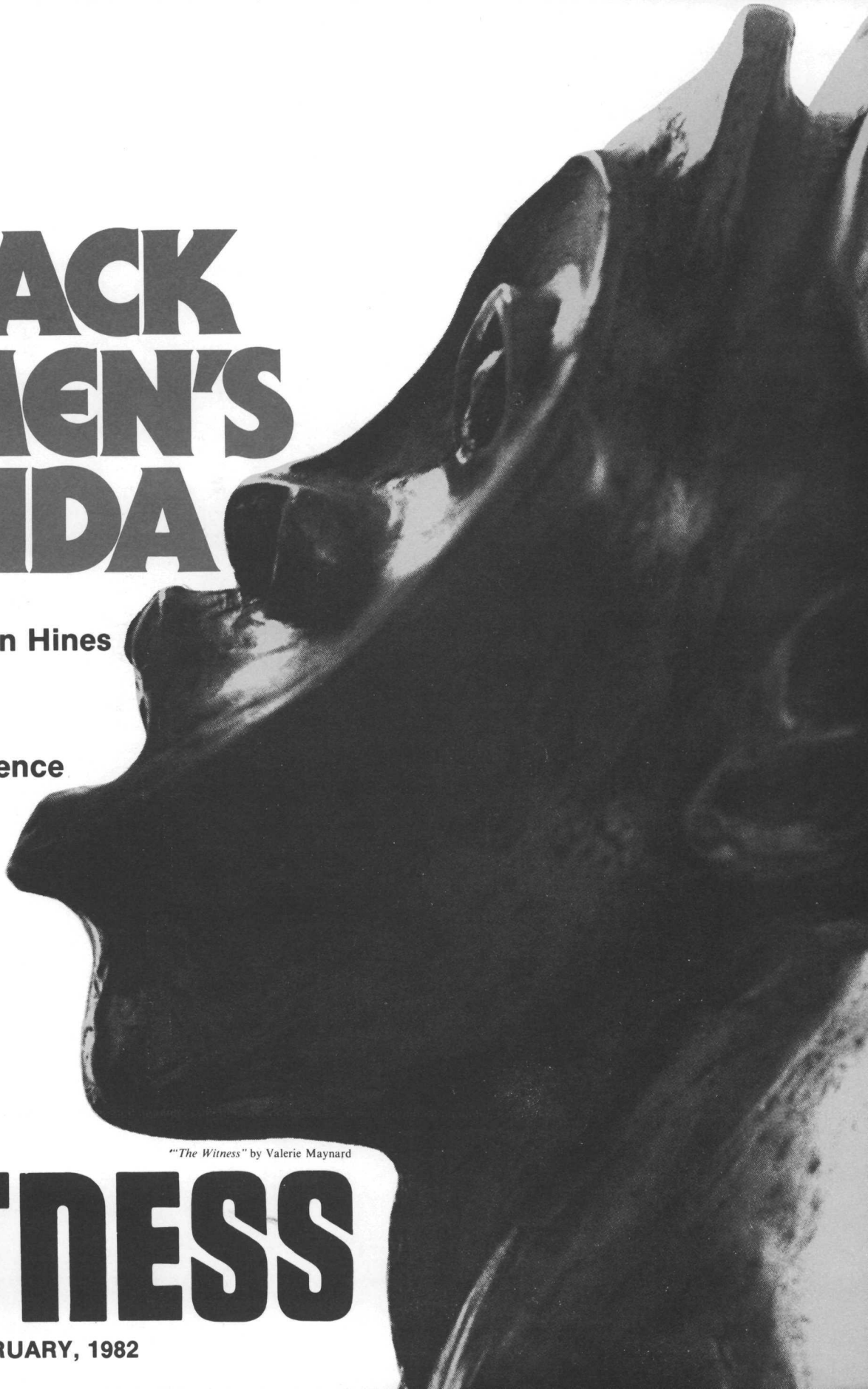
Part 1:
Deborah Harmon Hines
Myrtle Gordon

A Prison Experience
Ben Chavis

THE WITNESS

"The Witness" by Valerie Maynard

VOL. 65 NO. 2 FEBRUARY, 1982



LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Supportive of Labor

I recently got a layoff notice as Colgate shut its West Coast plant down. At a conference in Los Angeles on economic dislocation I picked up a copy of the November WITNESS. I have been a life-long Episcopalian and a member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship for 15 years. I didn't know the church was supportive of these labor issues. Glad to know it!

Rick DeGolia
Oakland, Cal.

Cutting New Ground

Just a fan letter to you for that first-rate issue of THE WITNESS — November, 1981. The articles were particularly interesting and cutting new ground, at least for me. Keep up the good work. God bless you.

The Rt. Rev. Paul Moore
Bishop of New York

Sexism, MNCs Interact

Congratulations on the sharply-focused article by Barbara Ehrenreich, "Multi-National Corporations Exploit Women on Global Assembly Line." (November WITNESS.) Attention to the interaction between sexism and economic giants is long overdue.

Sexism is essential to the multinational's goal of transforming the planet into what Peter Drucker refers to as the "global shopping center." Global corporations literally capitalize on

sexism in three inter-related ways:

1) Perpetuating sexual divisions in the labor force in order to reduce the price of all labor and maximize profits.

2) Promoting a consumerist ideology aimed most specifically at women who are encouraged to participate in the economy by purchasing products "guaranteed" to make them (and their families) feel more happy, secure, free or esteemed.

3) Creating an ersatz culture of global capitalism, which displaces women as teachers and keepers of distinct indigenous cultures.

Most simply stated, sexism in the work force means that women's labor is cheaper to buy than men's. An all-female production line in the U.S. costs only about 1/3 as much as one "manned" entirely by males, and only about 1/2 of that of a sexually balanced work force. In many other countries the disparity is even greater.

Women predominate in the production lines of many, if not most, of the labor intensive industries — textiles and garments, food production and processing, and the rapidly growing electronics industry. As Ehrenreich points out, these are precisely the industries most likely to relocate from a more industrialized (and unionized) part of the globe to areas where unions are non-existent or impotent, and wages and standards of living the lowest.

The corporate consumerist ideology encourages women to believe they participate in the economy through consumption instead of production.

The most important result is the marginalization of women in the economy which creates a constantly available reserve supply of cheap labor.

Finally, women are the keepers and teachers of many, if not most, cultures. The perpetuation of distinct, diverse cultures is anathema to those who seek to sell Nabisco wafers to the indigenous people of Latin America and deodorants to the people of Malasia. In order to survive, corporate capitalism must penetrate national boundaries, ancient religions and an immense variety of ethnic cultures. As the Nestle's infant formula campaign demonstrates, corporations find it necessary to appeal to women to sell products which threaten to maim or destroy the individual consumer, the culture, or both. Enormous amounts of corporate research money is currently invested in analyzing women's roles in different cultures with a view toward using traditional values to convert women from enemies of global corporations into their figurative, if not literal, slaves.

Those of us who would challenge the equation of political freedom and "unlimited economic opportunity" must dedicate a major portion of our resources to understanding exactly how and why sexism spells increased profit for the rich and even heavier oppression for all the poor.

Linda Backiel
Nationwide Women's Program
American Friends Service Committee
Letters . . . Continued on page 19

COVER

The cover of this issue is adapted from Valerie Maynard's sculpture, *The Witness*. The African-American artist sees herself as a "conduit" who articulates social themes or personal emotions which cannot be expressed verbally. She is one of the artists featured in the 22-minute film, "Black Modern Art," available for rental for \$30 from Unifilm, 419 Park Av. So., New York, N.Y. 10016. Her sculptures — in stone, wood and metal, many expressing prison themes — are shown while she comments on the origin and meaning of each work.



Valerie Maynard

THE WITNESS

EDITOR
Mary Lou Suhor

SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Robert L. DeWitt

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Richard W. Gillett
Hugh C. White

STAFF
Ann Hunter
Susan Small
Bonnie Spady
Lisa Whelan

PUBLISHER
Episcopal Church Publishing Company

ECPC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR
H. Coleman McGehee

VICE-CHAIR
Barbara Harris

SECRETARY
Helen Seager

TREASURER
Robert Potter

ASSISTANT TREASURER
Robert Eckersley

Otis Charles
Robert L. DeWitt
Steven Guerra
Suzanne Hiatt
Mattie Hopkins
Joan Howarth
James Lewis
Joseph A. Pelham

THE WITNESS is published monthly. Editorial office:
P.O. Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002. Phone (215)
643-7067. Subscription rates \$12 per year, \$1 per
copy. Copyright 1982 by the Episcopal Church
Publishing Company. Printed in U.S.A. ISSN 0197-8896

THE WITNESS EDITORIAL

Revolution on Thursdays

*Waldo: Henry! Henry! What are you
doing in jail?*

*Henry: Waldo! What are you doing out of
jail?*

The above dialogue, purported to have taken place during one of the most famous acts of civil disobedience in U.S. history, was resurrected recently in a play commemorating the event, "The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail." The dialogue recalls Ralph Waldo Emerson's visit to the noted Walden dweller who had refused to pay his taxes in protest of President James Polk's invasion of Mexico. Without a declaration of war or Congressional approval, Polk had sent U.S. forces storming into the bloody slaughter of a peasant army. Only one young Congressman had the moral courage to denounce the war — Abe Lincoln of Illinois.

Today, acts of civil disobedience abound, as latter-day Thoreaus protest injustice; e.g., the Plowshares 8 demonstrating against nuclear madness; church women in Los Angeles protesting deportation of Salvadoran refugees from the United States; and most recently, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans refusing to testify before a Grand Jury in Brooklyn, claiming that the legal system is being misused to harass their

people.

While THE WITNESS applauds these efforts to arouse citizens to action across the board, we sense an anomaly here. Writing about the Los Angeles women's protest in the December WITNESS, Joan Trafecanty hit upon it when she said, "Being a middle-aged woman, I find it very stressful to be arrested for civil disobedience and I've made a promise to myself that I won't do it more than once a year."

Drawing the moral to the tale, we note that more often than not, white middle-class or upper class people are in positions to be advocates for the oppressed and can choose to go to jail or not. Minorities and the underclass do not have that luxury.

Thus, Chicanos like Maria Cueto and Ricardo Romero, driven, as was Thoreau, to get the truth out about Mexico's oppressed history, are summoned for the second time before a Grand Jury in an action one can only suspect is designed to keep socially concerned and political activists off the streets. Similarly, Steven Guerra of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company's Board of Directors, and Julio and Andres Rosado, all Puerto Ricans, are summoned

Continued on page 19

Introduction

Black Women's Agenda

by Janette Pierce

In November, 1981 a national conference of Episcopal women in Indianapolis heard four black women forcefully express their distrust of the feminist movement. They perceived feminism as a white (woman's) concern which drains energy from the liberation battle of people of color.

The Rev. Barbara C. Harris, priest in charge of St. Augustine of Hippo Church, Norristown, Pa.; and educators Dr. Deborah Harmon Hines of Nashville, Mattie Hopkins of Chicago and Myrtle Gordon of Atlanta laid out "The Black Women's Agenda," one of three topics presented at the third national conference of the Episcopal Church's Task Force on Women.

The eight-year-old Task Force is the only entity within the Executive Council structure expressly concerned with empowering women. Unlike the more financially independent Episcopal Church Women, the Task Force is funded by the General Church Program Budget in the Education for Mission and Ministry section. Its primary public program has been three national conferences: in St. Louis 1977, Cleveland in '79 and Indianapolis.

In planning these conferences, the Task Force's concern with empowerment of women for ministry leads it to identify and address those personal and structural blocks that inhibit

women's full response to the Gospel.

In late 1980, when the Task Force began planning for Indianapolis the three-person conference subcommittee, of which I was a member with Marge Christie and Dorothy Brittain, recognized the tension between racism and feminism as a major block for women, the church, and society in general. But since the Task Force then had only one black member and the planning group was all white, the problem was to address the issue in a context that would have validity in the black women's community. Parenthetically, three black women now sit on the Task Force as well as a Hispanic and an Asian-American woman.

Originally, the subcommittee envisioned a dialogue presentation on racism and sexism between a black woman and a white woman. That this would have modeled, incarnated, the very split we were trying to bridge never really entered our minds. Fortunately, an advisory committee formed earlier, in cooperation with the Black Ministries desk at the Episcopal Church Center and our own black member, Vicki Reid, recommended the format and speakers which we heard in Indianapolis.

The four women spoke openly and honestly. Each of the 100-plus women present, at least the white women, had to deal with the pain, anger, frustration, even tears that many thought had been put behind

by the mid-seventies.

Subsequent to the conference, THE WITNESS approached the four women speakers and Task Force officials as to the possibility of publishing major excerpts of the talks to continue the dialogue in a broader forum. Permission granted, Part 1 of the series appears in the following pages.

Cassette tapes of the complete talks, as well as responses, can be ordered from Conference Corder, 3901 Meadows Drive, Suite B-1, Indianapolis, Ind. 46205. Write for two tapes entitled, "The Black Women's Agenda," total cost \$9.75.



Sculpture by Valerie Maynard

Part 1: Black Women's Agenda

Racism Breeds Stereotypes

by Deborah Harmon Hines

The black women that I work with, seek advice from, socialize with, go to church with come from a wide variety of backgrounds, economic strata, educational levels, work, family and leadership experiences. These women unequivocally see their roles as maintaining, strengthening and uplifting our race, our families, our culture and heritage, our men and ourselves. And these women see racism as their archenemy in this struggle.

Not a single black woman alive has escaped the blue-eyed monster called racism. Our experiences range from the terribly vicious to the mildly annoying. But in 1981, more than 25 years after the *Brown vs. the Topeka, Kansas Board of Education* decision, more than 10 years after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. and more than 100 years after the 15th amendment was passed guaranteeing blacks the right to vote, racism still exists.

My black friends still recount tales of white salespeople not waiting on them in turn in department stores. College students complain of being denied entrance into nightclubs and discos for

Dr. Deborah Harmon Hines is Assistant Professor of Anatomy at Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn. She received her Ph.D. in Human Anatomy from University of Tennessee Center for Health Sciences, Memphis, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Union of Black Episcopalians.



Deborah Harmon Hines

lack of the mandatory "two identifications, one with a picture" rule, when their white counterparts breeze by without identifications or purses. How often still does a black person show up at a personnel office, apartment rental office or real estate agent's office to be told that there is no opening?

Shocking, since the applicant had phoned prior to coming and was thoroughly assured as to a vacancy.

The blue-eyed monster, racism, rears its ugly head by assigning certain roles to black women. I've heard my white step-sisters complain of the roles

assigned them by society and still feel that my plight is worse. My step-sisters are very often as guilty as or guiltier than their menfolk in perpetuating these myths about black women.

Black women are often assigned the role of Aunt Jemima. As Aunt Jemima, we are forced to listen to and solve white folks' problems (the men and the women). As Aunt Jemima, we are also held accountable for the behavior of the entire black race. We solve everybody's problems, keep the race in line and still smile. Atlas did not have so formidable a task. The Aunt Jemima role is awarded to the "good ones" among us.

The rest of us have to contend with even less positive labels, such as that of Jezebel. Jezebel is highly oversexed, promiscuous, and knows all the secrets of exotic sex. This image makes us the prey of all men, black and white, and the envy and enemy of (righteous) white women. Only a few white women in real life or in the movies come close to this image. Yet when portrayed by these women, the erotic fires are exciting. When these same characteristics are assigned black women, they represent the dark, the evil and the degrading. Another side to this is that the whole world knows that there is no such thing as a 21-year-old black virgin. At least that's what the police said when one of my students was raped recently.

Another image assigned to black women is that of welfare seeker. Let's

call her Mary. Everyone knows that the welfare rolls are full of black women having babies to get welfare money. They don't want to work and just love living in the projects. Mary defrauds and takes advantage of the welfare system. Mary wears fur coats and drives a Cadillac, all bought on welfare money. These Marys are far outnumbered by the welfare bureaucrats who take their cut from the top.

Mary is no real competition for the bureaucrats in terms of what she takes from the system illegally. In a recent TV episode of *20/20*, investigative reporter, Geraldo Rivera, outlined the bureaucratic fraud in the New York food stamp program. That program is losing \$1.2 million a year to the bureaucrats, white collar criminals. It is truly ironic that if Mary and the bureaucrat were caught and tried for their crimes, Mary would inevitably be given a longer, stricter sentence for "stealing" infinitely less. The Marys that I know are a far cry from the Cadillac Mary portrayed in the media. Many of them on welfare attempt to go to school to improve their lives. If they succeed in acquiring financial aid to pay tuition, buy books, pay busfare and child care, then their welfare money is reciprocally cut. As a student, they have more expenses and less money, making student status unattractive, if not impossible. And yet, I have seen many Marys rise out of this situation.

I have a theory that the whole welfare system is built on keeping Mary in her place. Without the Marys, the bureaucrats would be out of work. The economy depends upon it.

Then we are portrayed as masochistic women, who enjoy being hit, stepped on and abused. Let's call this woman Lucille. Lucille loves her man so much that she will do anything to keep him and that includes wearing the badges (scars, bruises and broken bones) that are a sign of her love and affection. Of course, Lucille is not uniquely black.

Lucille is not necessarily poor. And Lucille does not love her plight.

Finally, there is the dominant matriarch. Let's call her Martha. Martha takes no stuff from anyone, especially her man or family. Martha calls all the shots. Martha pushes her children and emasculates her man. No wonder they are failures and it's all her fault. Of course the only way to neutralize Martha is for one of her step-sisters to arrive on the scene, provide the necessary comfort to the abused and save the day.

Again, my major objection is that my step-sisters support and perpetuate these myths. I must recount a personal experience. During a national scientific meeting in Miami Beach a few years ago, I was waiting for the elevator, dressed in a business suit, and I wore a convention identification badge. A white woman approached and exchanged pleasantries about the weather. From then on the conversation went downhill. The woman commented on the number of "damned Cubans" around and how she "just didn't trust any of them." She then went on to tell me, "how hard good help was to find." She then offered me a job as companion and baby sitter to her children, explaining that she had just lost her "girl" and was traveling to Jamaica. It never occurred to her that I had business in the hotel, did not aspire to be her "girl" and gave less than a damn about her children. She just knew that I was waiting in that hotel lobby for her to come along and offer me a job.

Racism colors all things black as negative. When black people use drugs, it is labeled as inherent and indigenous to the race. We are just a bunch of junkies. When white people deal with drugs, it is a social experience or an experiment, or even mind-expanding. The recent crackdown on drugs in the exclusively white Bellemeade section of Nashville, the exposure of Elvis Presley's drug habit, and the rampant

cocaine dealing of the white middle and upper classes do not carry the negative connotation that drug dealing in black North Nashville, Harlem, Watts or the Southside of Chicago carry.

Racism implies that venereal disease in the black community is different from sexually transmitted diseases of the white community. To my knowledge, these diseases are transmitted by *Neisseria gonococcus* (gonorrhea), *Treponema pallidum* (syphilis) and *Herpes simplex II* (herpes) in both the white and black communities. The latest information shows that these diseases have reached epidemic proportion among white college age young people.

Racism bares its venomous fangs in the form of genocide. In this, the richest country of the world, black babies die at a higher rate than white babies. Washington, D.C., whose population is over 70% black, has the highest infant



mortality rate in the country. There is a higher incidence of hypertension and diabetes among blacks than in the general population. Both maladies can be controlled by diet. Faced with possible cutbacks in school food programs and food stamps, I will not attempt to predict the maladies of this generation of school children.

Black people are much more likely to be subject to crimes of violence. The suicide rate among blacks is climbing. These facts reflect on poor mental and emotional health, direct progeny of racism. Such incidences will increase as social program funding decreases. Systematically my race is being starved, run crazy, made to kill ourselves, our families, our friends and our neighbors. This is systematic genocide.

The politics of racism, subtle and overt, program our black children for failure. School systems label black children early as social or behavioral problem children. Our children are completely frustrated by a system designed on certain entry level behavioral objectives that they have not been exposed to or do not possess. Their inability to deal with this system predisposes them to have behavioral problems. Subsequently, these children are funneled into vocational education programs, mainstreaming them to blue collar status. I highly suspect that many black children are being directed to these programs on general principle alone. A number of my friends have complained to me that white teachers direct black children to become nurses, secretaries and mechanics while telling the white children of the same class to become physicians, executives and astronauts.

While racism cripples our children, it robs us of our men. Our men are psychologically defeated by still not having equal access to jobs or equal pay. The Episcopal Church is a prime example. There is no equal employment opportunity on the local, diocesan or

national levels. At the National Episcopal Church Center, until last year only one black person held a high level executive position — Bishop Richard Martin. Since his retirement, no black presently holds a position on that level. With the exception of the Black Desk and other social ministries, most of the blacks at the Episcopal Church Center hold lower level positions (secretaries). Other than in the Office of Black Ministries, no black women are in charge of programs. Obviously there is no real Affirmative Action Program as far as blacks are concerned. Blacks are summarily discouraged from entering the clergy at the diocesan level with the excuse that there would be no positions available to them upon leaving seminary. This implies that black clergy can only serve black congregations. In these same dioceses, white clergymen and clergywomen are placed with black congregations, effectively blocking positions for black clergymen and clergywomen. Is this equal employment opportunity?

Racism placed a disproportionate number of black men on the battlefield of Vietnam and places them today in disproportionate numbers in prisons. For this reason I cannot support capital punishment. As long as the criminal justice system is weighted as it is, black people will suffer from it more than white people.

So black women's goals and agenda are very different from that of white women. Black women's goals have been defined by our roles, very few of which white women share.

Black women find it very difficult to ally themselves with those who have not been a part of the solution, but a part of the problem. Black women find it extremely difficult to ally themselves with those who say, "We have all suffered the same," when we know it isn't so. Black women find the situation intolerable when we are told (by white women) what we should do in our

struggle, and not asked what *we want to do*. We are being told that apples and oranges are the same, when we can see that they are not. You cannot easily substitute one for the other in a recipe. Their odors are different. They appeal to people differently. *Even a blind person can tell them apart*. Yet, a steady stream of rhetoric is aimed at convincing black women how much alike their lives, experiences, wishes and desires are to those of our step-sisters.

If white women would simply see black women as individuals, not extensions of themselves, but as we (black women) are, with all 57 varieties, perhaps we could begin to speak meaningfully to each other. Until our step-sisters stop superimposing their needs onto us, we have nothing to say to them.

History and memory have made black women more than a little wary of alliances with our step-sisters. In many instances in the past where we have struggled together, when our step-sisters achieved their goals, we were quickly cast aside and forgotten. That's understandable, since our goals were not the same. But we were duped into believing that they were. We are not so easily suckered into that ruse anymore. We really shouldn't have expected you to struggle for what we wanted or needed. It was/is your prerogative to quit. You had/have achieved many of your goals standing on our shoulders and backs. This country was built on our backs. White women have learned well from white men.

So, what is the black women's agenda? Our agenda involves maintaining, strengthening and uplifting our race, our families, our culture and heritage, our men and ourselves. We fight to erase racism. We fight for the right of choice and equal access. This does not imply that we want to be like white people (as has been a basic assumption of desegregation/integration). Black women do not want

or need validation of our humanity from or by white people. Black women have redefined our positions, goals, aspirations and ourselves in our own terms. We have discovered a wealth of resources among ourselves. We single mindedly pursue our agenda. We are experiencing some failures, but enjoying more successes. Anything else takes a backseat.

Unlike the child, Pecola, a character in Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, black women have discovered that having blue eyes will not solve our problems. Pecola was a jet-black, skinny, ugly, nappy-headed little girl. Everything that could go wrong in

Pecola's life did. She was the butt of all of the schoolyard jokes, no one wanted to sit with her in class, she was raped by her father, etc. In Pecola's class was a fairskinned black girl with hazel colored eyes. The fairskinned girl led a charmed life. People adored her, boys worshipped her, everything went right for her. Pecola's mother worked as a domestic for a white family. In that family was a blue-eyed blond little girl. This little girl was petted, pampered, cooed over and called pet names. She had nothing to worry about. From observing characters like these, Pecola rationalized that blue eyes represented all that was good in life and that if her

eyes magically changed to blue over night, all of her problems would be solved. Pecola even went to a mystic in pursuit of her blue eyes. Having blue eyes will not solve our problems.

Black women have discovered something else voiced in the last lines of the play, *For Colored Girls Who Had Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Was Enough* by Ntozake Shange:

"I found God in myself, I found God in myself.

And I love her so dearly, love her so dearly, Lordy.

I found God in myself."

Thanks be to God.

Bigotry 'Fashionable' Again

by Myrtle Gordon

I am a black woman, wife, mother of three and grandmother of eleven. My particular response is in the area of racism as it affects the black family. Those of you who are mothers as well as all those who have been mothered in such a special, loving relationship, must recognize that our children are as close to our hearts as our relationship with our God, for we have been privileged to give life to them through the birth process. How, then, must we feel when our children are made to feel inferior and second class by so many negative conceptions and misrepresentations?

An African folk tale goes like this: A little African boy went every day to the



Myrtle Gordon

mission school. Each day his father asked, "Son, what did you learn at

school today?" The boy replied, "The missionaries told us, again, that same old weary tale about how the great white hunter kills the lion." The father asked, "What troubles you about that story, son?" The boy replied, "Well, they tell us that the lion is brave and strong — the king of the jungle. So, if this is true, it just seems to me that, *occasionally*, the lion would kill the white hunter!" The father shook his head sadly and said, "Son, until lions learn to write books, that's always the way that story will end."

Hence, black people must tell their own story, both orally and in writing. Traditionally, as much as black people have been "studied," the black family as an institution has not been adequately or objectively investigated. Robert Hill, author of "The Strengths of Black Families," a report undertaken by the National Urban League, states five vital strengths which have served black families well in their struggle to cope

Myrtle Gordon an Atlanta educator, serves on the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Society for Ministry on Aging, and is a member of the Ad Hoc Committee of Black Women for the Task Force on Women, of the Union of Black Episcopalians, and of St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

with American society. These are:

- **STRONG KINSHIP BONDS** where extended family relationships were developed and maintained to care for all black children, from the infamous days of slavery when families were sold apart from each other, up to and including the divisive effects of today's economic pressures on black families.

- **FLEXIBILITY OF FAMILY ROLES** where all members learn to do what is necessary to keep the house in order and to support the family without quibbling about what is woman's work and what is man's work.

- **STRONG RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION** which is characteristic of most black people. This deep core of faith and spirituality has been disparaged by some who would negate every aspect of black life, even the sacred. But it is important to understand that the black church became the one social institution in which blacks were left alone by their oppressors and so it became a socially bonding institution, a political base, and a means of catharsis from the rigors and deprivations of daily life. Not accidentally was the Montgomery bus boycott organized in a black church and converted by a black preacher into the springboard of the major civil rights movement in American history.

- **STRONG WORK ORIENTATION.** From dawn to dusk, in the typical American city, public transportation is overrun with the black working class, going downtown and across town to work; armies of heroic mothers who leave their own homes and children to care for the homes and children of strangers; men and women who work not one, but two or more jobs. (One job at typically low pay scales for blacks will not yield enough income to keep the family going.) One could well wonder, where are all those "lazy" black people one hears so much about? Indeed, black people were the *last* to

come to the welfare rolls and *never* in majority numbers!

- **HIGH ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION.** Hill describes the overwhelming desire of black families from all social, economic, and educational strata, to see their children succeed in the world of formal education or more prestigious occupations than was accomplished by the parent generation. Black families have continued to value education as an equalizing liberator even when racist practices have closed doors and they have had to confront obstacles to learning in spite of "adequate credentials."

I could go on and on, about genocide, about white middle class norms as criterion for viewing black families, about public and private mores that still cannot use a common language to address social traits that are shared by black people and white people alike. In other words, the old "immorality" attributed to black folks (illegitimacy, broken homes, commonlaw marriages, venereal diseases, drug junkies, etc.) has become the "new morality" for white folks (solo parents, parents without partners, drug users, alternative life styles, etc.)

Let me inject here some excerpts from an article entitled, *Bigotry Has Gotten the Signal Again*, by a white columnist writing for an Atlanta newspaper:

"I firmly believe that the majority of people are good, honest, charitable, generous, humanitarian, racially harmonious and imbued with goodwill — right up to the absolute minimum degree that is required of them and not one iota more. . . . Except for the few who are guided by a strong internal moral and ethical compass, most people seem to respond in such matters to external pressures — to follow the course that their society at that moment demands. Laws notwithstanding, it is the public will that determines whether those laws have any effect. The

importance of societal standards affects personal attitudes on strictly moral issues and the individual expression of them.

"For years it has been socially unacceptable to be racist even if bigotries were harbored and only expressed among likeminded people, but that has begun to change now. For some reason, there is less prohibition about airing feelings of prejudice. Somewhere, somehow, people have gotten a signal that it is no longer necessary that we all behave as if we are racially 'liberal,' that we believe in such things as equality and brotherhood. There is an easing of the national campaign for racial equality, a relaxing among businesses of minority hiring and training programs and a closer control of access to power. Reagan's retrenchment on affirmative action and welfare programs that are perceived as being mainly for blacks has given the signal again. A 'conservative' wave is said to have swept the country, so 'liberal' racial attitudes aren't required anymore. A little bigotry is all right again.

"What difference does it make, one might ask, if the more enlightened racial attitudes were only forced and insincere in the first place? A lot. Most of the progress that was made in race relations in this country came while, and because, people were required by societal pressure to behave as though they wanted it. The longer that pressure is relieved, the farther back we will fall, and the longer it will take to regain what is lost. And we should remember that it took hundreds of years to get that far in the first place!"

So you surely must see, along with my black sisters and me, that racism must die so that we all can truly live!

(See Part 2, "Black Women's Agenda," in the March issue of *THE WITNESS* featuring Barbara Harris and Mattie Hopkins.)



Hands Across the Sea

U.S. Ordains Woman From England

by Suzanne Hiatt

When Elizabeth Canham was ordained Dec. 5, 1981, by the Rt. Rev. John S. Spong, Bishop of Newark, their photos made the front page of the *New York Times*. There was nothing unusual about the ordination of a woman in Newark — 14 women priests already serve in the diocese, and there are more than 500 clergywomen in the Episcopal Church across the nation.

What made the event historical was the nationality of the ordinand. She is English.

Elizabeth Canham is the first woman deacon to transfer from the Church of England to the Episcopal Church in the United States to become a priest.

The Church of England approved the ordination of women to the priesthood

"in principle" six years ago but has not come around to approving it "in practice." A year ago Ms. Canham came as a deacon to the American Episcopal Church in order to test her vocation to the priesthood. In the normal course of events she has now been ordained priest and is serving as Assistant Rector at St. David's Church in Kinnelon, N.J. She plans to stay in the United States for several years and to become an active and informed clergy member of her adopted church. But she does plan to return to England some day, and her very presence will challenge the Church of England's inability to recognize and test the vocations of women.

The present situation is that women priests from the four national Anglican churches that do ordain women (the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong) are forbidden to function as priests in parish churches of the

Church of England. Before these four national churches began to ordain women, Anglican priests from abroad were welcome in English churches. However, in 1976 a 19th century law called "the Colonial Clergy Act" was revived. The law states that "colonial" clergy must be licensed to function in the Church of England. The 1976 revision added the regulation that women priests were not to be so licensed. Presumably Ms. Canham will be asked to challenge that law when she returns to England to visit.

Ms. Canham's ordination was marked by communications from two absent English bishops and the presence and participation of a third, who preached the sermon and joined in the laying on of hands. At the start of the service a letter from the present Bishop of Southwark, The Rt. Rev. Ronald Bowlby, was read. Bishop Bowlby affirmed Ms. Canham's vocation and in

The Rev. Suzanne Hiatt is currently on sabbatical from Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, where she is Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology.

general terms pledged his support for her ministry, both in this country and when she returns to England. Ms. Canham comes from Southwark and was ordained a deacon in that diocese in 1978.

A poem written for Ms. Canham by the late Rt. Rev. Colin Winter, exiled Bishop of Namibia and a strong advocate for human rights of all kinds, was also read. The Rt. Rev. Mervyn Stockwood, retired Bishop of Southwark and the bishop who insisted in 1978 that he was ordaining Ms. Canham deacon rather than deaconess, preached and noted in his remarks that he was the first bishop of the Church of England to participate in the ordination of a woman priest.

It was a great occasion for the Diocese of Newark and for Ms. Canham's friends and supporters who made the trip from England to be with her. She was presented for ordination by a number of laypeople and priests from both the Church of England and the Episcopal Church. Among her presenters were two women priests who had been ordained irregularly in Philadelphia and Washington in 1974 and 1975. Anne Hoad, an Englishwoman, was the principal deacon, assisted by Gayle Harris, a Black American deacon. Throughout the service it was clear that both churches were well represented. It was also clear that the American church, especially in the person of Bishop Spong, saw itself as doing something for the Church of England that it is as yet unable and unwilling to do for itself.

As an amateur church historian, I was especially struck by the irony of the situation. The American church had to go to the non-juring bishops of the Church of Scotland for its first bishop. Now, two centuries later, we are quite probably providing the English Church with its first woman priest. I thought of General Pershing's remark when he landed in France with the American



**Elizabeth Canham
For England, a Priest**

Expeditionary Forces in 1917, "Lafayette, we are here." "Seabury, they are here," I thought to myself as I participated in the ordination.

The ordination was an historic event. Just how it will effect the course of the struggle for the ordination of women in the Church of England is yet to be worked out. Other Englishwomen will be ordained abroad. Kath Burn, an Englishwoman, is in training now in an American seminary and is a postulant

for ordination in an American diocese. Ironically, the second woman ordained priest anywhere in the Anglican communion, the Rev. Joyce Bennett, who was ordained in Hong Kong in 1971, is retired in England now. While she has been honored by Queen Elizabeth with the Order of the British Empire, she is not allowed to function as a priest in England.

There is a debate in the Church of England among supporters of the

'Vocation Is Stronger Than Nationalism'

The Rev. John S. Spong, Bishop of Newark, read the following statement at a press conference before the ordination of Elizabeth Canham:

We view this ordination of the Rev. Elizabeth Canham to the priesthood as an exciting event in the life of the entire Anglican Communion. The oppression of women by the church is being countered in our action. The prejudice that seems to demand that women accept the stereotypes created for them by men is being challenged.

But more important in this action, a woman's vocation to the priesthood is being affirmed. God calls, and the church tests that call. I can assure you and the leaders of the Anglican Communion all over the world that Elizabeth Canham's call has been tested thoroughly and rigorously.

I do hope and pray that this action will call all members of the Anglican Church to end the discriminatory practices that still mark some parts of this worldwide communion. Specifically, I hope the leaders of our mother church, the Church of England, will act quickly to claim for themselves the talent, the treasure, and the enrichment that hundreds of Englishwomen today stand ready to offer their church in the order of priests. If they do not, these women will follow the call of God to other parts of the world, for vocation is a stronger power even than nationalism.

Beyond the Anglican Communion, I want to send a signal to Roman Catholic women and Orthodox women that the Christian Church is beginning to hear God calling us all to see the full dimensions of a new humanity that is both male and female. Until that new humanity is affirmed in the priesthood of the church of Jesus Christ, we cannot escape a distorting sexism that will be an increasing source of embarrassment and scandal in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

ordination of women as to how to proceed. Some advise patience and allowing the debate to continue its slow

course in successive meetings of the church synod. Others support actions such as Ms. Canham's ordination, strictly legal but at least slightly provocative. Still others demonstrate at ordinations of men in England and contemplate action similar to the ordinations in 1974 and 1975 in the American church. Meanwhile, women with priestly vocations and bishops troubled in conscience grow restive, just as they did here nearly 10 years ago.

An English priest here for Ms. Canham's ordination, and thinking about an irregular ordination in England, explained to me that some proponents of women's ordination in England feel that he and his friends are "claiming the wrong bit of history" in supporting her American adventure. The implication is that they are advocating the course by which the ordination of women was won in this country through the controversy over the two irregular ordinations prior to 1976. They are advised to look instead at the history of women's ordination in Canada and New Zealand where everything was done decently and in order. The fact that church leadership was strongly advocating the ordination of women in those two churches, whereas it was not in the American church and is not in England is not taken into account.

The fact is that a growing number of people in the Church of England are claiming the wrong bit of history — our history. Knowing the turbulence of that history as one who helped make it I am anxious for them and wish that the confrontations and heartbreak which lie ahead could be avoided. But at the same time, I am convinced that that history needs to be relived and I rejoice to have our experience acclaimed and affirmed. I welcome Liz Canham as my sister priest in this church and look forward to the day when she will be recognized and her sisters ordained in her own land and church. ■

The Cost of Discipleship

What you have received
is what He gave you
What you know
and feel is truth
He has inspired
that which compels you
now to leave
home and hearth and
loved ones
He has prepared for you
you: His strength
perfected in your weakness:
Your weakness
perfect in his strength
As Deborah was
a prophetess in Israel
As Hannah sang out
her love song
with liberated heart
As Mary
stood immovable
with sword pierced heart
in pain wracked
vigil
so you must stand —
you can no other —
and roll away the stone
of man-made
guilt and fears. For
you are a priest
forever
let all acknowledge it
and recognise the flowering
of your womanhood
in each and every priestly deed.

"That which I received
I also passed on to you . . ."

— Colin Winter

(The Rt. Rev. Colin Winter, exiled Anglican Bishop of Namibia, wrote the above poem for Elizabeth Canham. He died of a heart attack in November at his London home, at the age of 53. An outspoken opponent of apartheid, he was expelled by South Africa, which continues to administer Namibia in spite of the withdrawal of UN permission to do so. — Eds.)

'Mad Lady' Had Message for Time Present

by Roberta Nobleman

When I was a teenager, there was an elderly lady brought every Sunday into St. John's Church, Tunbridge Wells, England, in a wheelchair. She sat in front, in a large flowery hat festooned with hundreds of dangling safety pins. We called her *The Mad Lady*.

She was marvelously unpredictable. One day she brought a bag of oranges, ate them through the service, and then threw the pits and peel into the collection plate. More disturbing was when she seized the communion wine, drank the entire contents, and then hurled the chalice at the vicar's head. She burst into hysterical laughter. So did I, and was evicted from the church along with a friend. We spent the rest of the service rolling on the church lawn in helpless, wonderful adolescent laughter.

Church became quite dull when the cause of *The Mad Lady's* hysteria was finally revealed. I was there when she delivered an angry diatribe on the entire male priesthood. It seems she would only receive communion at the hands of a woman. A very English compromise was made, and thereafter *The Mad Lady* received her communion from Sister

Barnes, a nun attached to the parish.

I thought of *The Mad Lady* many years later, here in the United States. A man refused communion wine from the chalice I offered. I thought, "He's feeling unworthy, or he's a member of A.A., or a Roman Catholic on a visit." None of the above. He simply did not like to have a woman offering the blood of Jesus Christ who, after all, was a man.

I realized what a profound experience communion is. Watch children's faces, at the communion rail, some giggling, some extra solemn, some filled with wonder, but all overawed by the ritual. In a very deep sense, the communion service is bound up in who we perceive ourselves to be and how we relate to other men and women. The chancel has always been seen to belong to men. See the chancels of our great cathedrals filled with men: bishops, priests, choir boys, all robed and ready, as the female approaches and kneels with outstretched hands. How many women lay readers, new to the job as I, felt somewhat intimidated by the chancel, as though we were trespassing in some Men's Club?

When I shared the chancel last spring with a female priest, I felt a great sense of exhilaration, triumph even, as though we two had, somehow, won through. I thought of the moments of birth,

of quickening, experiences no man can ever know, and yet perhaps the closest we can ever be to that Ground of all Being. The Incarnation touches women differently from men, a kind of compensation for the male Jesus, born into a patriarchal Hebrew society.

A ghostly vision of bare-breasted pagan priestesses, engulfed in steaming incense from ancient times — the spirit of Venus, Diana, Ceres, the witches of Salem and Salisbury — all these we inherit at the altar of Jesus Christ in 1982. "Time Present and Time Past are both perhaps present in Time Future, and Time Future contained in Time Past," said T. S. Eliot. Elaine Pagels, in her book, "The Gnostic Gospels," describes the followers of Valentinus as having all things truly in common. They drew lots for who was to serve the priestly duties that day, and naturally the lots fell equally upon men and women. Our attitude towards this plan may tell us how we feel about men and women and worship in this Time Present, Past and Future.

Now, reflecting back upon the eccentricity of *The Mad Lady* of my youth, I sense that we caught a glimpse even then of an eminently sane and logical outrage at the exclusion of women from the sanctuary.

Roberta Nobleman is a layreader at St. Luke's, Haworth, N.J. and the mother of three children. She is an instructor at Kean College, Union, N.J.



Freeing Prisoners With the Bible

by Ben Chavis

In the early '70s, as a United Church of Christ minister and field worker, I was organizing black brothers and sisters in North Carolina.

We were working for the rights we knew God intended us to have. But that was more than the state of North Carolina was willing to give. And so nine associates and I had to be framed on false charges of arson.

Our trial was a mockery. The testimony of the chief witnesses was full of contradictions. The charge was patently false. But what did it matter? We were slated for conviction. And the state got what it was after.

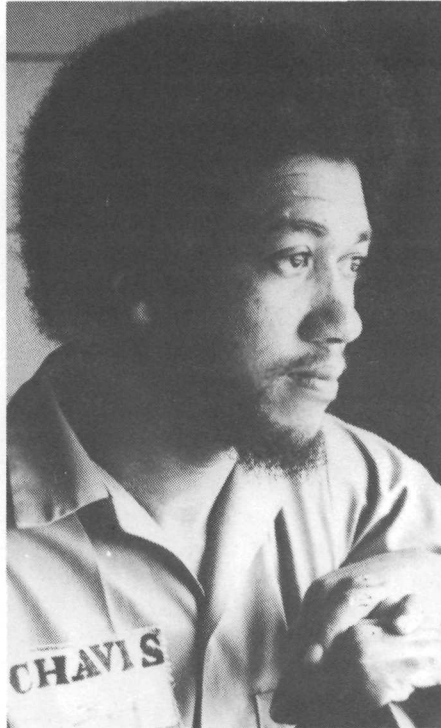
Not long after, Amnesty International, after investigating our case, declared us political prisoners. People from around the world pled for our release.

It was to no avail. The state of North Carolina held off my parole till 1979. And the U.S. Department of Justice refused to intervene.

Finally, last December, a federal appeals court quietly overturned our convictions. The court declared what we had known all along: that the charges against us had been totally without foundation.

The four years I spent in prison will never leave me. They showed me the importance of a risking faith. And they reinforced in me the liberating power of the Word.

The Rev. Ben Chavis is Deputy Director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ in New York City and a Ph.D. candidate at Union Theological Seminary. This article was taken from his remarks before the Theology in the Americas Conference in Detroit. A shorter version appeared earlier in *The Other Side*.



Ben Chavis

One incident in particular stands out in my memory. It was 1976 and I had just been transferred to North Carolina's Caledonia State Prison Farm. Now Caledonia is a big plantation-type prison, where prisoners are forced to give their labor to the state for free. Even now, while you're reading this, prisoners are out in the fields at Caledonia. And guards are riding over them with shotguns, just like pharaohs.

Well, shortly after arriving at Caledonia, I met native American prisoners, Spanish-speaking prisoners, white prisoners, and black prisoners — *many* black prisoners. I discovered that they had a small Bible study going, so I asked the prison superintendent if it would be all right if I helped lead it.

At that time, the superintendent's knowledge of what the black church is all about was limited — very limited. "Sure, go ahead," he told me. (The Lord works in mysterious ways!)

Well, I got to work studying the Scriptures, and a strange thing happened. In just three weeks, that little Bible study grew from 30 inmates to 630 inmates! That was most of the prison population, and we had to move the Bible study to the prison cafeteria. In fact, on certain shifts they even had to hire extra guards just to keep a watch on us.

Now I'll be honest with you. I was doing more at the Bible study than just quoting the Scriptures. Of course, there's nothing wrong with quoting the Scriptures — so long as you apply the living Word in your living bodies. When you appropriate the message, you can't help but get strength and determination. You make a channel for the radiance that dwells within the Word. But I was more than quoting. I was applying. And my brothers related to that kind of Bible study.

Let me tell you, Caledonia had a lot of racial problems. And it probably still does. But the Word brought native Americans, blacks, Hispanics, and white prisoners together.

I preached the same message to all. "Even though you're behind bars," I'd say, "you're still a child of God. You have some human rights that no state can take away from you. They are inalienable because they are *God-given*."

And then I told them that we'd have to organize because in the real world, until we organize with power, we'll never have those rights.

The prisoners understood that.

So did the prison superintendent. Not many weeks had gone by when he called me into his office. "Chavis," he said, "the state put you in here for organizing black people."

Well, right off, the first thing I did was to thank him for making that affirmation, because the state had never before admitted the real reason for my imprisonment.

The superintendent, however, wasn't particularly impressed. "Chavis," he continued, "I'm going to give you a direct order."

Now in prison, when you get a direct order it means you have to do whatever the guy says. And if you don't, they throw you in the hole, which is officially called isolation — as if you weren't already isolated enough!

"Don't say anything to those prisoners that's not in the Bible," he growled. "My guards are going to watch you!"

It was all I could do to hold back my smile!

Well, when I got to the Bible study that week, I remembered how David had gone through a lot of trials and tribulations. And I remembered how he had documented a lot of them in the Psalms. So I turned to Psalm 27 and began to read — verbatim: "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?" Now the superintendent was sitting right behind me. And he hadn't made a move. So I kept going.

A few lines down, however, I got to where the Psalm talks about what happens to evil doers. I read how in the day of the Lord they will stumble and fall.

As soon as he heard those words, the superintendent jumped up and grabbed the Bible to see if that's what it really said. When he saw that it did, he cleared the hall and sent all the prisoners back to their cells.

And then he ordered me to the hole.

I was sent to isolation not because I

had broken a direct order. I hadn't. I was sent to isolation because the words of Scripture had threatened the prison establishment.

I was reminded of a reality that day. In this evil world, you don't have to break a law to be punished. If you are about the concrete liberation of those who are oppressed, then this world will not let you be free. It will seek to bind you to its ways.

Now all of this happened to me in the same year that a self-professed born again Christian was saying a lot about human rights. The year of his election, the people of North Carolina stripped off my clothes, and they put chains around my ankles, waist, and wrists. They did that, they said, to more effectively throw me in the hole.

"Those chains hurt — God knows they hurt! But I was determined not to show any pain. Now as I was walking down the hall, something happened that only God could have arranged. The handcuff on my right wrist came loose."

This was no ordinary hole they threw me in. This was one of those fancy ones with sliding electronic doors and all that sort of thing. Let me tell you, they've got some modern holes in this world.

But before they threw me in there, they did one other thing. They took away my Bible.

As I sat in that modern hole with my chains on, I realized that this was not the first time a black man had been put in chains. And it probably wouldn't be the last. But then I remembered that even Jesus had been put in chains. And remembering that gave me strength.

Further, as is so often the case, the world's effort to exercise power boomeranged. Rather than becoming fearful and submissive, the other

prisoners realized that if they did not mobilize, if they did not organize, if they did not analyze their situation and move on it, then they themselves would be thrown in the hole. So even while I was in chains, the movement went on. It multiplied.

This was too much for the authorities. So the prison superintendent got on the loudspeaker and announced to the whole prison that I was being transferred.

Now they don't normally announce when a prisoner is being transferred to another institution. But this superintendent was a hard-core wielder of the world's kind of power. And he was trying to use me to put fear in the other prisoners.

After broadcasting the announcement, the superintendent came to the hole to get me. He gathered my stuff together and gave me some clothes. And then he put the chains back on. Finally, he had all the other prisoners locked up in two large cellblocks that had a central hallway down the middle. The idea was to march me down that hallway in humiliation before all the other prisoners.

The superintendent ordered two guards to take charge of me. One was white, and one was black. But before they marched me through, the superintendent bent down and personally tightened the chains around my ankles. He wanted me to have an expression of pain on my face as I marched in front of the prisoners.

When he had the chains good and tight, the superintendent ordered us to start walking. And those chains hurt — God knows they hurt! But knowing what the superintendent was about, I was determined not to show any pain.

Now as I was walking down the hall, trying to hold back the pain, something happened that only God could have arranged. The handcuff on my right wrist came loose!

I noticed it, of course, right away. But

one of the things you learn in the movement is to have a strategy in mind so that at the most propitious moment you can implement it. I decided that I would wait till I got a little farther down the hall, and then I would raise my fist up in the air. My brothers in the prison, I knew, would understand what it meant. They would see it as an affirmation of struggle, a symbol of solidarity.

And so, just as I reached the middle of the hallway, I raised my fist high in the air and kept on holding it erect.

The prisoners in the cellblock, noticing what I was doing, suddenly stopped playing poker, stopped doing whatever they were doing. Teenage prisoners stopped. Middle-aged prisoners stopped. And even the many, many very old prisoners — some of them almost 100 years old — stopped what they were doing, stopped what they had been doing for years.

And those prisoners, those prisoners that surrounded me in the hallway, risked an administrative write-up. From everywhere, they came up to the bars and raised their fists with me. And in that split second, in that dramatic moment, my two guards — one white and one black — temporarily forgot in whose employ they were. And they, too, raised their fists with me!

It was like a sign, a powerful sign from God that the struggle for freedom will never be defeated. It united us all. It was a sign that the bars and chains of this world will not forever stand.

I know from my experience that day at Caledonia State Prison Farm that there's a power in keeping the faith. There's power in knowing that even when you're going through trial, you *can* stand for what is right. You *can* take the risks.

We need, as a church, to take that risk — much more than we do. No longer can we afford merely to *talk* about a church that's committed to justice. We must risk *being* that church. We must

risk committing ourselves to active struggle on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

I speak from the black perspective and I speak from the perspective of one who has experienced some things that our forebears have experienced, and have experienced some things that probably some of our children will have to experience.

As long as innocent children continue to die in tenement fires, as long as families have to live in winter without heat, hot water and food, as long as people are forced to live with rats and roaches, the Gospel must be heard and judged against the disorder of society, and the church has a responsibility not to point to some way-off eschatological future, but to help them overcome their powerlessness now. The issue for us once again is *survival*. The root problem is human sinfulness which nurtures monopolistic capitalism, aided by racism and abetted by sexism.

The new church, I believe, is envisioned to be an international, ecumenical faith process. I say faith process because if you don't practice your faith you don't have it. The new church is envisioned to be the international, multiracial, ecumenical faith process community from which one receives the inspiration and the motivation to struggle for all of God's people, to transform and revolutionize the world into a holistic human society where universal justice, freedom and peace are a common reality, a concrete reality. This vision comes to life only in those who are committed to an active struggle for the liberation of the poor and oppressed.

The handwriting is on the wall but some can't see it. I'm saying to our white brothers and sisters, those of you who have oppressed your brothers and sisters, allow us to interpret the dream, allow us to interpret the vision because you cannot see it. There is no room in the new church for racism, sexism, or

classism. So the new church by definition must be a prophetic church. A prophetic church is never silent. It is never a non-critical church and it is never a passive church.

What are the tasks of a prophetic church? One of the primary tasks in the 1980s, specifically in the United States, is to help revitalize a mass national freedom movement through the organization and mobilization of the grass roots and the local church. The biggest difference between the 1980s and 1960s is the absence of a visible mass supported freedom movement, led by the oppressed leadership and coalition of all the progressive forces. Lest we forget, it was primarily through the church that Martin Luther King, Jr. successfully organized and mobilized millions of poor people in an activist, militant, and national campaign against racial discrimination, class exploitation and war.

I believe that we can best help our sisters and brothers in Latin America and in other parts of the Americas and in Africa, Asia, and in the native lands, not by making vociferous resolutions of solidarity, but providing the vanguard leadership and direction for a rebuilding of a mass-supported national freedom movement. If we will assume this responsibility, we will not only say that we shall overcome, but that we shall, in fact, be able to overcome. ■

Resource

The complete text of Ben Chavis' talk appears in the book, "Theology in the Americas: Detroit II Conference Papers," edited by Cornel West, Caridad Guidote and Margaret Coakley and published by Orbis Books in its Probe Series. Order for \$10 plus \$1 handling from Theology in the Americas, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1244 AA, New York, N.Y. 10115.

Others in the book include William Tabb, Helen Rodriguez, James Cone, Ed de la Torres, Lolita Lebron, Beverly Harrison, Gustavo Gutierrez, Mike Meyers, Jo Klas, and Wilfredo Velez.



Maria Cueto, Steve Guerra (left), and Ricardo Romero take a coffee break between court appearances in Brooklyn. Together with Andres and Julio Rosado, they have refused to testify before a Federal Grand Jury and face possible jail sentences. Guerra is a member of the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of THE WITNESS.

Prosecution 'Re-Evaluating' Charges Against Hispanics

by Mary Lou Suhor

The fate of Maria Cueto, Steven Guerra and three other Hispanics subpoenaed before a Federal Grand Jury in Brooklyn must still be described in the subjunctive mood, as THE WITNESS goes to press. (See January WITNESS.)

After two court appearances — Dec. 16 and Jan. 6 — they *could* go to jail on contempt charges for the duration of this Grand Jury, pending Prosecuting Attorney Edward Korman's re-evaluation of the case, or they *could* be released, with charges dropped. A decision was expected about mid-January.

Guerra, Julio and Andres Rosado — all Puerto Ricans — and Ricardo Romero, a Chicano, were cited with contempt after refusing to testify before the Grand Jury Dec. 16. At that time, Cueto was separated from the four men and ordered to appear Jan. 6, when they were scheduled to reappear, expecting sentencing.

In a last minute decision, the prosecution simply processed Cueto on Jan. 6, bringing her litigation up to the others, following her refusal to testify. Then, abruptly, the prosecution told Guerra, who had flown in from California; Romero, from Colorado;

Cueto, from Texas, and the Rosados of New York to return home while the case was being reconsidered.

The five Hispanics have taken the position of non-collaboration, based on their belief that the Grand Jury is being used to disrupt and neutralize their political/community work. All except Guerra have been jailed previously for the same stand.

Guerra, who currently serves on the Episcopal Church Publishing Company Board of Directors, attributed the court's delay to the "quick intervention of the church in this case." Robert C. Potter, Esq., noted Episcopal layman

and Wall Street lawyer, appeared in court Dec. 16 representing Bishops Paul Moore of New York and Francisco Reus-Froylan of Puerto Rico, and the National Council of Churches. He noted that the ministry of the bishops includes ministry to Hispanics, and that they had had privileged communication with some of the defendants who served on the National Commission for Hispanic Affairs of the Episcopal Church, of which Cueto was executive director in 1976.

He also noted that the church was interested in the fate of all five, and as individuals they had the right to express critical views publicly without being challenged for it. All have been outspoken about Puerto Rican independence and the rights of Chicanos and Mexicans.

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, which publishes *THE WITNESS*, set up a committee last year to inform itself about the issues around Puerto Rican independence, at Guerra's request. The Rev. James Lewis of Charleston, W. Va., is chair; other members are the Rt. Rev. Antonio Ramos, associate director for the Caribbean and Latin America, National Council of Churches; Carman Hunter, Cueto's former supervisor at the Episcopal Church Center, currently with World Education, Inc.; Joan Howarth, Esq., of Oakland, Cal.; and Potter. Hugh C. White is staff liaison to the project. All were in court on Dec. 16 to offer support except for Lewis, whose flight was canceled due to weather conditions.

The Grand Jury, ostensibly, is proceeding on information from Alfredo Mendez, one of the FALN members captured last year, who opted to turn state's evidence. The FALN is an alleged Puerto Rican terrorist group, and the Grand Jury is seeking information about an explosion in Queens in 1978, and related questions concerning fugitives.



Members of the ECPC Puerto Rican Committee meet to discuss the case of the five Hispanics called before the Grand Jury. Left to right are Robert C. Potter, Carman St. J. Hunter, Hugh C. White, staff liaison, and Joan Howarth. Missing from photo are the Rt. Rev. Antonio Ramos and the Rev. James Lewis.

Romero, a Chicano activist, pointed out that although the investigation is centered around Puerto Rican concerns, he and Cueto were taking a stand alongside their fellow Hispanics "because we believe that the cause is just."

"It is truly a sacrifice for us, because we are involved in community projects with our own people," he said. "But we believe that Puerto Ricans have a right to speak out and we support Puerto Rican independence. We are two peoples with one struggle for liberation."

Cueto most recently has been working in an adult literacy program in El Paso at Segundo Barrio Center.

Guerra said that the FBI, in calling the Rosados, Romero and Cueto to testify before a Grand Jury for a second

time, were trying to "criminalize Hispanics."

"They appeared surprised when we all showed up in court. Their hope seemed to be that we would not, and then we *would* be criminals. To face jail for a second time is very difficult. There was a buzz in the court when Julio was late; they were hoping he would not appear," Guerra said.

The fact that a person can be re-summoned any number of times to a new Grand Jury points up one of the injustices in the system as presently constituted. Congressional legislation to restructure the Grand Jury has thus far been unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the five Hispanics await the Brooklyn court's decision, aware that each delay ticks off the life seconds of this Grand Jury and shortens their term in jail, should they be sentenced. ■

before the same Grand Jury. All have spoken publicly and openly for Puerto Rican independence.

They do not have the option to resist a subpoena, nor to escape contempt charges for refusing to testify.

One black activist described the situation this way: "You white folks have the choice of fighting the Revolution on Thursdays. We have to struggle to survive every day."

In sum, THE WITNESS, while praising the acts of those who choose to become voices for the voiceless and advocates for the powerless, feels that this is not a place to say, "Vive le difference." Rather, it is an opportunity to reflect prayerfully and rededicate ourselves to the day when the social institutions of this country will function democratically. At the present time, however, when it comes to prison, many are called, but few have the luxury to choose. (M.L.S. and the editors.)

Credits

Cover, Beth Seka, adapted from a sculpture, "The Witness," by Valerie Maynard; p. 2, Maynard photo courtesy *Unifilm*; p. 5, Hines photo by Gunter's Studio, Nashville; graphic p. 6, *ISIS International Bulletin*; p. 8, Gordon photo by Torrence Studio, Salisbury, N.C.; graphic p. 10, from Liz Canham's ordination program; photos pp. 17-18, Mary Lou Suhor.

Glad Subscriber

I am interested in *anything* that stands up to, and challenges, the "Moral Majority." I gladly subscribe to THE WITNESS.

The Rev. John Manola
Wilmington, Del.

Simmons Not Guilty

On Dec. 9, 1981, James Simmons, the Muckleshoot/Rogue River Indian accused of killing a white prison guard, was declared not guilty of all charges against him. (See November WITNESS, "Prison Worker's Plea for Native American.") I wish that all of you could have been in the courtroom when the jury brought back this verdict.

So many people have worked towards this victory over the last two and one half years. I would like to thank the people who traveled so far to come to the trial, who donated money to cover expenses, the artists and printers who worked on publicity, the journalists who wrote articles, the musicians and cooks who helped with the benefits, the people who held ceremonies for Jimi and his supporters, the legal workers who volunteered so much time and energy, the people who donated supplies, offered advice, put us up and fed us, and everyone who consistently offered support and prayers.

Many people have asked what will happen now. Jimi Simmons' parole date was originally 1982. He has been held in segregation and isolation, while he awaited trial for over two and one half years. He was informed after the trial that he would be held there for another 30 days. During this time he has not been allowed to participate in the Sacred Sweatlodge ceremonies held in the prison, despite the fact that the legal system found him not guilty. A Sacred Pipe was taken out of his cell and held as "evidence" in his case. The Pipe was never presented during his trial and it still has not been returned to the Brotherhood of American Indians.

We have been informed that the prison administration is going to hold hearings and attempt to transfer James Simmons to another prison, perhaps outside of the state of Washington. We are asking that this be stopped. We all won a victory when James Simmons was found not guilty; now we must cement that victory by insuring that no further retaliation is made.

Karen Rudolph

The Simmons Brothers Defense
Committee
Seattle, Wash.

Statement of Conscience

Our monastic foundation made a statement of conscience on Thanksgiving, 1981, which though controversial is an affirmation of the cause of God. It is a symbolist, mystic-prophet statement which we wish to report as a matter of public record. The monastic chapter decided, in the Name of God, with Jesus in the Spirit to refuse the ministrations (sacramentally) of any deacon, priest or bishop who rejects and denies the validity, regularity, or licity of our sisters who are ordained to the priesthood.

We ask the understanding and help of sympathetic brethren so that we might not be isolated even from the Eucharistic assembly because of reactionary (if veiled) rejection and hate.

Dom Christopher Jones, O.M., Prior
Transfiguration Retreat Monastery
Pulaski, Wisc.

The Old Time Gospel Hour

Printed circuits
Solid state grace
Back woods
White-robed cross burners
Wield gleaming cleavers
In televised surgery
Slicing souls
To a white bone of hate

Hands washed clean
With industrial strength blood
Of black men lynched at midnight

Minds bleached clean
In the electric glow of preachers'
Promised forgiveness

Thoughts hard and hairless
From brains shaved clean
As a woman's thighs
Made virginal born again
Through corrective surgery

— Rod Reinhart

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company
P.O. Box 359
Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002
Address Correction Requested

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
North Wales, Pa.
Permit No. 121

At Last, a Moral Majority Survival Kit

A PRESS PROFILE ON THE NEW RELIGIOUS RIGHT AT A SPECIAL PRICE FOR READERS OF THE WITNESS

Keep track of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority (and how to cope with them) with an authoritative and illuminating report on the New Religious Right. Produced by the Data Center of Oakland, Cal., in association with THE WITNESS, *The New Right: Fundamentalists & Financiers* underscores the role of Right-wing evangelists in the New Right Movement. A compilation of reports and analyses from the nation's leading newspapers and magazines. Up-to-the-minute, authoritative — it's \$6.50, but available to you as a reader of THE WITNESS at the special low price of \$5.00 — a \$1.50 saving. Order now, while the supply lasts.



"Look, Jerry Falwell, stop playing you-know-who!"

☐ Yes, I want my Moral Majority Survival Kit. Please send me _____ copy(ies) of *The New Right: Fundamentalists & Financiers*. Enclosed is \$5.00.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Fill out and mail today to THE WITNESS, Box 359, Ambler, Pa. 19002) Payment must accompany order.