

THE WITNESS

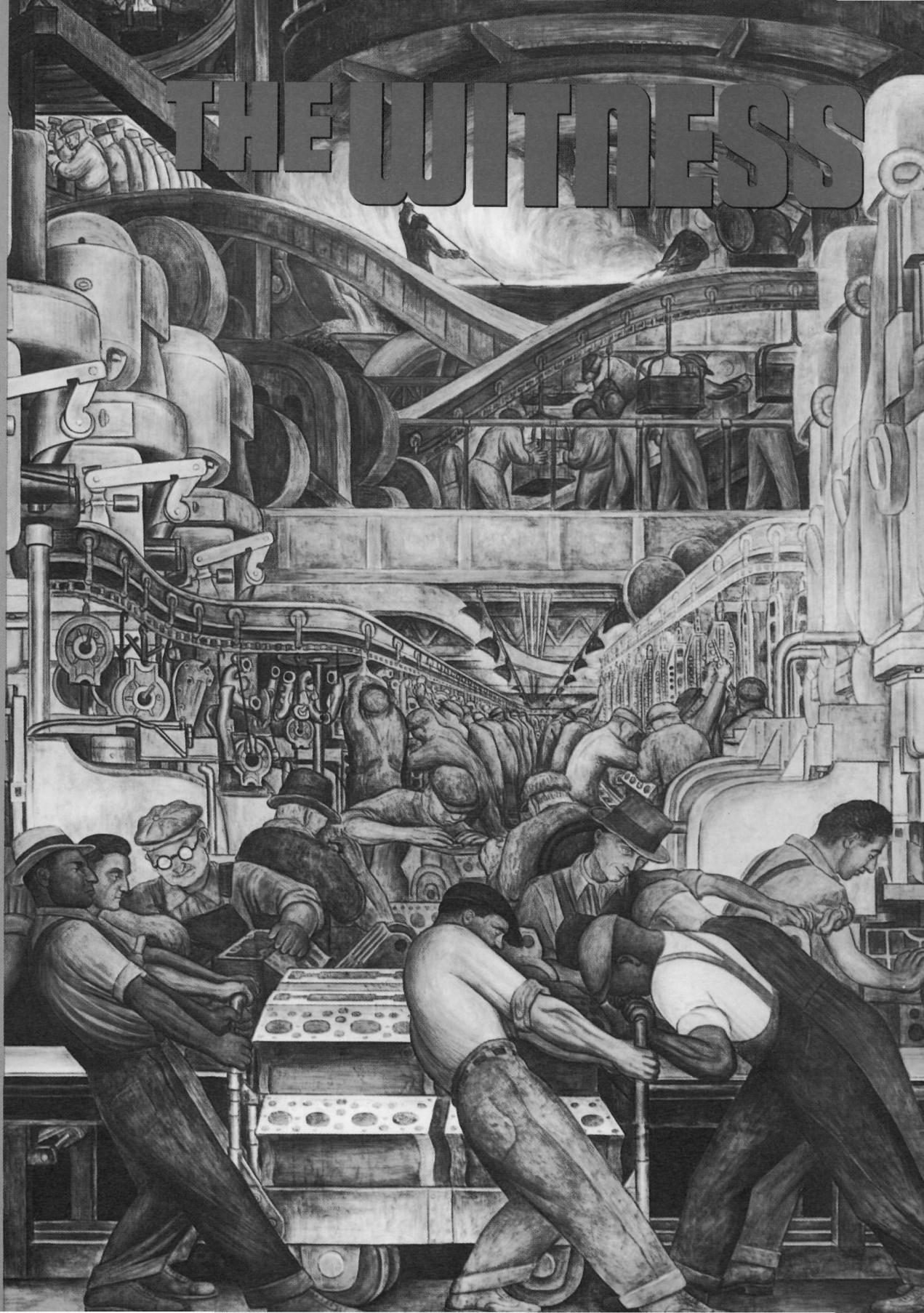
The Church questioned its urban mission during the machine age. Now it faces the challenge of preaching good news as capital flees, the infrastructure deteriorates and people suffer.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Challenging
Death

A Mother's
Love

New
Construction



In Praise of *The Witness*

SOMETIME DURING the last few years of my active episcopate I discovered *The Witness*.

I've been glad ever since.

I'm especially glad since reading the last issue from Ambler (July/August). Many things provoke that gladness.

First -- I served on the Executive Council for six years and became a friend and admirer of Jan Pierce. It was nice to see how much Sue "favors" her in her person as well as in her sense of justice.

Second -- the Marler article about the family could, as the author suggests become a guide for planning for each parish and diocese in the church. Powerful stuff there!

Third -- the General Convention Round-up is better than anything I've seen and certainly reflects what I was sensing and seeing. I thought you were a mite too gentle with the Bishops. We were so narcissistic we almost forgot our purpose for being in Phoenix. We need to be glad about being Anglican instead of trying to compromise all the time with those in the Church for whom

being Anglican is much less important than being politically triumphant.

I could write more -- it was a damned good issue!

My best to all who are staying in Ambler -- my best to those in Detroit -- keep it up.

Walter C. Righter
Bishop of Iowa, Retired

I WAS DISAPPOINTED with the tone of Susan Erdey's report on General Convention (in the July/August issue), "Lots of Heat, Not Much Light." The impression given is that because much of the Convention focused on Homosexuality it was trivial. The Episcopal Church spent a number of conventions over the centuries dealing with Black issues when those issues arose due to the changing relationship between the Races. A number of conventions were needed to

work through the question of the Ordination of Women. In both cases the time was properly spent.

So too, was this Convention properly spent. Even if the only conclusion was that some decision has got to be made. Indeed, it is feasible that the next three years may provide a breakthrough.

Ms. Erdey fails to appreciate a possible connectedness between Racism, Sexism and Heterosexism. To me, all three are merely facets of the same "Sexual Dysfunction." We are not a more important issue; we are just the easiest issue to defeat. The Gay issue would never have gotten to the table had not the issues of Racism and Sexism preceded it.

John Kavanaugh
Detroit, Michigan

SUSAN ERDEY'S '91 General Convention report (*Witness*, July/August) questioned lack of a powerful anti-racism witness as had been expected. Some may agree with her evaluation but I do not. As one having spent my life's ministry in the struggle for justice transforming racism/sexism, I was awed and filled with hope. It was electrifying to have heard the beloved voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. booming over the church gathered for the opening service. The racial audit and the resolution naming our "institutional racism inside our church and in society" and seeking to "become a church without racism committed to end racism in the world" were signs of grace of a church being transformed. Far more important than the amount of the offering was the launching of The Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy fund, to which the whole Convention could contribute at the daily morning Eucharist. It has BEGUN, and will grow and will make a difference in the lives of the students this fund benefits. I contribute joyfully!

The 70th General Convention found new, creative ways to act the church into a new way of thinking in greater appreciation of the richness of our racial diversity to celebrate. Our morning Eucharists were led by the full range of colors in God's beautiful family... women and men... using several languages. It was living out our inclusiveness called into being by The Lord and stressed by our Presiding Bishops.

Adding to the church calendar with a unanimous vote in both Houses, the name of Jonathan Daniels, an Episcopal Seminarian killed in a 1965 Civil Rights struggle in Alabama; marked how far the church has come on issues of racism. Twenty-five years ago, the Bishops of NH and Alabama would not have been united, yet in Phoenix '91, they co-sponsored this resolution from the states where Jonathan was born and died.

This is not the 60s. We have made some progress. For 1991, General Convention faithfully addressed who we are as a multi-racial church. I rejoice!

Mary Eunice Oliver
San Diego, California

Issues of Age and Gender

IN HER ARTICLE in the June issue, Pam Darling addressed "Sexism, Racism and Phoenix." However, one "ism" that she did not address is "age-ism." I was one of four aspirants in the Diocese of Washington to be rejected because we were deemed "too old." The age range of the four was 48-54. The rationale was that there has been an influx of second-career people into the seminaries in the past ten years or so, and now the Church is "stuck" with an aging clergy which is putting an added burden on the Pension Fund. We were also told that the Church needs "fresh, young leaders." One member of the Screening Committee told me that at my age, I should want to "just kick back and enjoy life; leave the hard work to the youngsters." Another member, a man in his mid-seventies, asked what I thought I had to offer the Church at my age.

It's a good thing that George Bush decided to be President of the United States. He's too old to be a priest in the Episcopal Church.

Beverly Bradley Aiuto
Silver Spring, Maryland

I WAS STRUCK BY some significant parallels in Pamela Darling's article: "Sexism, Racism and Phoenix" (June 1991) and thoughts by Robert Bly in his newest book: *Iron John: A Book About Men*.

Robert Bly also illustrates the effects of patriarchal structures in society but specifi-

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Letters

cally addresses how men perpetuate the wound passed on by generations of absent, withdrawn fathers. Men react by ascending into powerful positions or descending into victimized positions which require women to be either oppressed or care-givers for men.

We men carry a valuable wound which can be experienced as a punishment or a gift. The men I know who have valued the wound see themselves as fallible humans in search of intimacy with self, others and God. There is no room for sexism, racism, homophobia in a man's search for positive male identity.

I applaud Bishop Browning's efforts to be inclusive and I challenge all men in the Church to examine our wounds and work together to destroy the oppressive systems in the Church and society. I refuse to pay the price for privilege and power any longer.

Jake Czarnik-Neimeyer
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Clergy Sex-Exploitation

There can be no authentic and meaningful consent between a parishioner seeking pastoral care and his/her clergyperson; one cannot be pastor and lover at the same time.

Often, clergy refuse to accept the power of their role in the life of one who is seeking pastoral care.

There is a great need to teach clergy how to:

1. recognize their needs for intimacy
2. get those needs met appropriately in ways that avoid dual relationships with those entrusted to their care.

Susan Moss
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Secrecy and Power

AT NEARLY 70 and "semi-retired" I've begun cutting down on subscriptions and such. *Witness* is one I had decided I'd cut - not because it isn't good or I'm angry with it. It just seemed time, that's all.

But in your June issue I find you've touched on the *power* issue that I have long believed was at the bottom of so much of the reactionary agenda and you have dared to wonder about the closet homosexuals who

many suspect are a part of that movement. I have been convinced since 1977 that that combination (and who has lacked power more in the Church than closet-gays?) was fueling the destructive energy that in my view drives so much of that movement.

Thank you for your important ministry.

Anne W. Baker
Carrizo Springs, Texas

A Voice for Monogamy

DONNA SCHAPER'S "The blessings of sexuality" (in the May issue) is the most uncharitable, narrow-minded, and generally offensive essay I have noticed in your magazine. As a deeply committed Christian feminist, an Episcopalian with evangelical roots, I am insulted by Schaper's disparagement of those whose experiences and beliefs might differ from her own.

First, many women and some men do *not* want "inconsequential or recreational sex rather than consequential or procreational sex." The dichotomy is a false one. There are many psychological and spiritual consequences attached to any expression of sexual intimacy.

Secondly, Schaper implies throughout that normal enjoyable safe sex means with whomever consents to it whenever one feels like it. Those who disagree are accused of "hatred of the body" and "abnormal repression." She apparently does not realize that many people, including thoughtful non-Christians, enjoy sexuality only in faithful committed relationships.

Third, Schaper maintains that normal young people are sexually active from around 12 onwards. Exceptions are labeled as upwardly mobile girls who are damaged by their abnormal delay and end up having difficulty in enjoying sex or giving and receiving physical pleasure. I find this insulting, considering that I have been in love with the same person for 23 years without finding my sexual life hampered by the lack of previous promiscuous experience.

Fourth, Schaper attributes abortion and unwanted pregnancies to repressive behavior or hesitancy about using birth control. It would seem obvious that abortion is caused by unwanted pregnancies and unwanted

pregnancies are caused by sexual activity -- frequently by irresponsible sexual activity. One would like to think a Congregational minister would tolerate abstinence as a fool-proof and safe method of preventing abortions and unwanted pregnancies instead of condemning it as abnormal repression. To be sure, given the present state of society, birth control is better than complete irresponsibility on the part of those who engage in sexual acts without concern for intangible consequences.

As a feminist, I would prefer to see men become more unselfish in their sexual attitudes and behavior rather than see women free to be as selfish as many men have been. As a Christian feminist, I am disappointed that publications such as yours give so little attention to the struggles faced by the majority of women whose problems do not make sensational headlines. A very disproportionate amount of space is given to the subject of homosexuality, for example, and very little to the subject of how to maintain a good marriage and meet the volunteer demands of the church while seeking to develop one's talents and career. It is [very difficult] for a married woman to closet realities such as lack of sleep for 11 straight months with an infant, or the large piles of laundry generated by a family.

I have never been convinced by arguments that homosexual behavior is appropriate for Christians, nor am I comfortable with the ordination of homosexual persons to the ministry. However, I would prefer the ordination -- and the writing -- of Virginia Mollenkott, a lesbian with a genuine concern for the problems of women different from herself and a serious respect for the Bible, than that of Donna Schaper who seems to have no such concern or respect. I wonder whether the change of location and staff will add any breadth to the subject matter covered by *The Witness*. The Episcopal Church needs a good dose of evangelical concern for Scripture and spirituality blended with its own strong tradition of ritual and symbolism and tolerance. As indicated in the recent interview with Virginia Mollenkott, much of her thinking has reflected that blend.

Anne Ramirez
Springfield, PA

THE WITNESS

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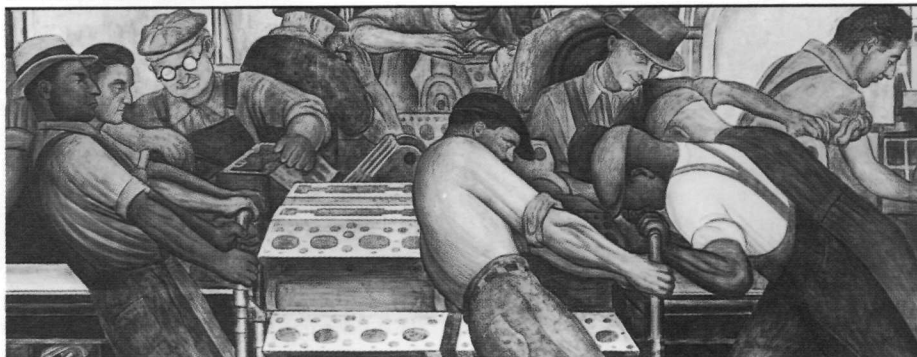


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Cover credit: Diego Rivera, courtesy of the Detroit Institute of Arts; Barbara Barefield, design. It is the policy of *The Witness* to use inclusive language whenever possible.

Meeting the Challenge

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

A number of friends have noted that there is a point on the freeway, about 45 minutes outside Detroit, where you begin to wonder whether your house is intact. You see broken glass and a ravaged house. Or worse, the charred skeleton of what was your home. One

more of the gaping, mournful giants that dot every Detroit neighborhood.

Bill and I brought the girls home from a vacation in the northern Upper Peninsula recently. We had slept to the sound of the waves of Lake Michigan and the kids had moved and had their being in a shelter of sand.

Close to home, in the dark, a city ambulance sped by. It braked outside our local party store and the crew joined the police and t.v. newsmen. Without stopping, and with only our imaginations informing us about what was going on inside, we circled around the block to our home -- still standing, intact, but seemingly foreign.

We searched our hearts, as we always do, for that Dulce Domum voice that Kenneth Graham describes in *The Wind and The Willows*. We longed for that wafting, almost physical, call of home as we pulled sleeping children from the car and wondered when the random gun shots, the robberies, the Crack-addicted madness might come too close for sanity -- one block being closer than we liked.

One month before Bill and I were married in 1984, we discovered

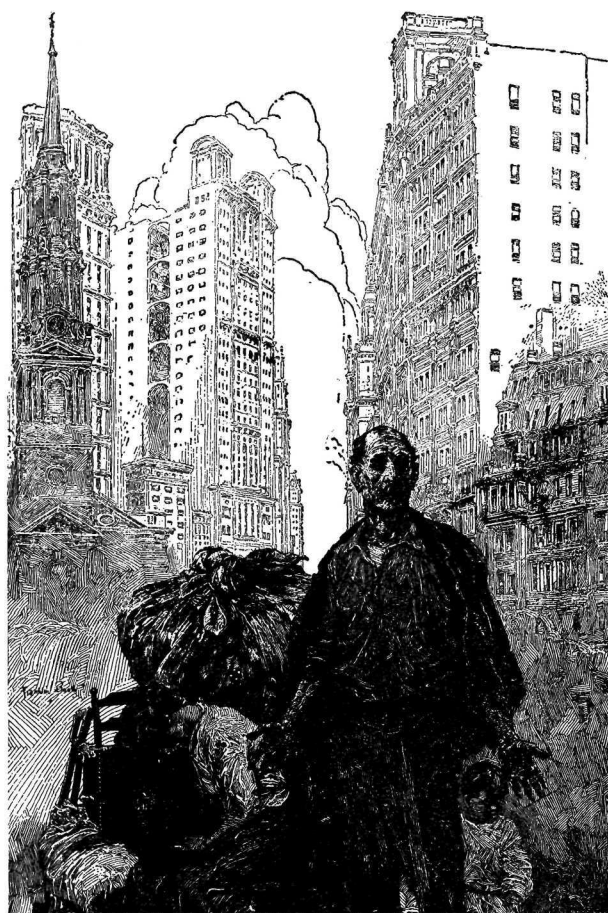
that we were related, both coming, at least in part, from Scotch Irish farmers in southwest Pennsylvania. So, it surprised us doubly that we each chose independently to locate in Detroit, in the same neighborhood, for the same reasons.

I first arrived in Detroit in 1980, fresh out of graduate school in New York City. I worked as a staff writer for the Associated Press and hated it, but I fell in love with Detroit.

It's a one-industry town, which gives it a raw clarity. People here have known whether they are management or labor. They have a sense of what that means. They have stories to tell about the flying squadrons that founded the United Auto Workers and who lived in friends' garages to avoid company killers.

They knew that the city's streetcar lines were torn up to create a market for the automobile -- and while they understood the often brutal mechanics of the exchange of labor and materials for capital, they also had a love affair with the automobile. It still astounds me when a friend casually points out a car on the freeway and says, "That's a 1956 Chevy -- no, no it's a 1957." Say what?

There's a lack of pretension about this town. It has been driven by a desire for money and opportunity, a desire unobscured by the genteel glove (woven at elite private schools) that veils the fist in establishment circles. There is a way that the straightforward ambitions and language of Detroit's residents has anchored the American Dream. From Ford's \$5-day-wage until recently, immigrants from the Black south, from Appalachia, from eastern Europe and from the Arab nations exchanged their lives for homes and possessions, for educations for their children. Yet, Detroit's auto workers never confused their employers with a fairy godmother; they had an astute appreciation of who did and who did not give a damn about them and managed to



This drawing was published in *The Witness* in 1931 in an issue headlined: *The Machine Age, Can the Church Meet the Challenge?* The drawing of a homeless family in the center-city is as powerful an indictment of the post-industrial age now as it was of the machine age then.

credit: Franklin Booth

forge a labor movement out of that insight. And they paid a price.

The same savvy and realism launched the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the people whose names we remember from that struggle live in Michigan: Rosa Parks, the survivors of Viola Liuzzo, Walter Bergman (who has been wheelchair bound since then) and others.

In the years following World War II there were cycles of depression when the auto industry would slump, but there was always a recovery.

So in the early 1980s, there was a profound confusion and deathly despair when it came clear that the auto industry was not going to rebound, at least not in a way that would employ U.S. workers. [See page 12.]

At that time, *Business Week* counselled corporate managers that the middle class was going to have to pay for the redevelopment of America's corporate infrastructure and this would require the "most massive selling job in history."

The selling job kicked into overdrive and union workers found themselves depicted as greedy and over-consuming, as jeopardizing American industry. Concessions became prevalent. Union leaders formed partnerships with the corporations.

Coleman Young, who was elected Detroit's first Black mayor and who integrated the previously brutal police department, climbed in bed with the corporate planners. If he had a choice, he never said so.

The people of Detroit waited. They had trusted the labor and civil rights movements. They waited for good leadership. Meanwhile, they received emergency food packages from Germany and they watched the city's infrastructure deteriorate.

Whole city neighborhoods were condemned to accommodate corporate developers like GM and Chrysler, but the new, improved plants (which had been

given every available tax abatement) were highly automated and down-scaled and retained only a fraction of the employees projected. (See page 27.) And city residents waited.

Apparently following the wave of corporate closings, the Churches seemed to follow suit. The Roman Catholic hierarchy closed 45 neighborhood churches in the late 1980s. The United Methodists moved their conference headquarters from downtown Detroit to the suburbs. And residents waited.

*As is true in Guatemala,
South Africa, in all places of
crisis around the world, we
begin to see the faces of
people who can teach us the
things that make for peace.*

Detroiters saw Crack move through the city, binding their children in addictions that far-surpassed the erratic, bloody compulsions of some of their parents. And they watched children kill one another for prestige sneakers and jackets.

Finally, in 1985, the power of the spell that seemed to hold the Motor City deadlocked in despair, began to wane. The mothers of children murdered in Detroit and the mothers of the children who did the killing joined hands (see page 10). Others began marching against Crack (see page 26). Still others began imagining what the city might look like if we surrendered our addiction to corporate domination (see page 22).

And residents suddenly found a voice. They shouted down several of the mayor's megadevelopment plans. They vetoed casino gambling. They now talk about preserving Detroit's housing stock, re-designing systems of education and support for youth, and supporting small

businesses that can feed neighborhoods.

These dreams are not unique to Detroit. What may be unique is that Detroit has no alternative. Unlike New York and Washington D.C., it does not have to be preserved because it is an international hub. Unlike Minneapolis and Houston, it does not have a diversified economic base. Detroit, in recent years, has become a throw away city. One to which no one wants to come. It is surrounded by phenomenal wealth in its suburbs but the city itself is falling apart.

If it survives, it will do so because Motor City residents learn to rely on their own skills, imagination and appreciation of community. These things offer its only hope.

Some are suggesting that Detroit should use its vacant land to become an agrarian center, exporting fruit and vegetables. Even contaminated soil could still produce ornamental trees.

Fifty years ago, the Church was struggling to determine how it might be relevant in the machine age. In the 1960s, the Detroit Industrial Mission attempted to carry the Gospel into auto plants. These evangelists met with labor and management and at least opened the doors to conversation.

The Church faces a new challenge now.

What the Church does with this fact, how people of faith view Detroit and what they do with the resources at hand, has everything to do, as Manning Marable suggests (page 16), with the state of our souls.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. "If only you knew the things that make for peace."

And, as is true in Guatemala, South Africa, in all places of crisis around the world, we begin to see the faces of people whose whole confidence is in the Gospel. The faces of people who can teach us the things that make for peace. We see the tension of the crucifixion reenacted and we hold our breaths. **TW**

The Diego Rivera Mural, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1953-1959

by Christina Pacosz

for Wladek

Light pours from an abundant source above me. I breathe carefully in a vast room, each wall a gigantic picture. I get a stiff neck staring up at the Christ child with (you tell me) Hoover's face. This Jesus is squat and ugly. You laugh your bitter laugh.

Our faces turn up, plants desperate for light. Father and daughter, we speak in whispers. Our voices move away from us, ripples on the surface of this immense cathedral of light.

You dressed the dandy in your youth. Mother starched your white shirts and brushed your single dark suit spotless. You polished your Cancellation shoes and combed your black hair. Mother smiled at you, you looked so good.

Giants with wise oval eyes guard this room. They stare into the light from under straight dark hair and stand on thighs the girth of old-grown cedar, skin the color of madrone. Beneath wide and solid feet gems gleam purple and red amid the black flag of earth.

I wear a dress of navy taffeta that rustles like water over stones in a shallow creek. I walk to the fountain, the focus of limitless light and kneel on the marble rim, burdened by so much light pushing on me, insistent as a tide. You hand me pennies to drop in the fountain like prayers. How you stare at me! Who can tell what the future will bring?

You tell me Rivera was a communist who loved all the poor people of the world, especially the people of Mexico. Your words catch on hooks lodged in the soft flesh of your throat, and you gulp air like a fish wrenched from water.

I watch light descend with such surety and imagine swimming out to meet it. You would be so small and far away then.

We wade into that light often. Your shoes clicking on tile, we talk behind our hands, or not at all. My fingers long to make the sign of the cross, but there is no fount filled with holy water blessed by the parish priest. Only a fountain of infinite light.

I can't remember when you tell me what your father told you: Diego sat sketching the deafening factory in a pool of quiet, drawing men standing to attention at minute tasks. Grandfather was in Diego's direct line of vision and grateful for an indelible, uncheatable immortality.

You never said Rivera was married to an artist. You probably didn't know. Decades later I discover her: Frida Kahlo. She was a wife and desperate to be a mother. Henry Ford didn't commission her to paint the workers on his assembly line.



She painted herself, brown ochre, like the giants in her husband's mural, with a monkey at her shoulder, yellow ribbon tied in its fur, matching the one wrapped in her hair. She didn't have a chance to paint your father stooped over his work.

One dark night, the Detroit streets deep in sharp, cold rain, your father stepped off a curb, into a fast car, and died on the pavement he'd been promised was gold.

We visit your mother in her flat near Michigan Avenue. She steams kielbasa, fries pierogi in pale yellow butter and sets out rye bread for us. You are faithful and attentive, a good son, and loyal too.

She cooks. Her husband perpetually glares into a room filled with cascading light he will never see.

Standing up to Death

by John Meyer

The Street is a dense confusion of sights and sounds and lurking death. To be on the Street, to be poor at all, means to be relatively unprotected from death. In the Mainstream, things are organized to keep death back. Death has to wait in line. Not so on the Street: death is free to rage like a storm. The death rate on the Street is already high and getting higher. We are now beginning to hear the phrase *endangered species* applied to young Black males in the central city.

On one of the "live" corners of Detroit, across from Tiger Stadium, at the west edge of the downtown, St. Peter's Church stands tall against the night. On the same corner, as baseball fans hurry from their cars towards the glare of the stadium lights, street people, at a slower pace, with no special place to go, hunt for returnable bottles and cans.

St. Peter's clings to a precarious life, hunting for money and members, parking cars for baseball fans, and trying to adapt itself to the state of mind known as the Street. It has itself become a "Street Church."

The Street is more than a metaphor for poverty. The Street is an emerging separate culture, one of growing size, with identifiable values of its own in sharp contrast to those of the Mainstream. I am intrigued by the view that the Street is the very shadow of the mainstream society of jobs and families and faith in the future: a sinister Dionysian underworld that attracts, repels and mocks the straight world.

There are no visible boundaries to mark where the Street begins and ends,

but people usually know where they are in relation to it. Mainstream people often choose to stay away from the Street, or hurry through it if necessary. On the other hand, a number of mainstream people say goodbye to their jobs and families each year and enter the Street by way of drugs, alcohol and crime -- or by way of depression, family upheaval. Far fewer people from the Street cross over into the Mainstream.

We have come to see our life and ministry as a contest of will with Death. It is what gives focus to all that we do: the soup kitchen, the program for girls, the worship, or the repairs on the boiler.

Low income, welfare dependency, joblessness, the normal benchmarks of poverty, are frequently found on the Street; but we may question whether poverty and the Street are indeed the same thing. Not everyone on the Street is poor in these terms.

It was in trying to understand the self-destructive behavior of young people in our neighborhood that we began to look beyond economic deprivation as the prime motivator. Why were so many risking their lives on prostitution, drugs and crime? There were many answers, but one began to arrest our attention: sexual child abuse.

For me it goes back to a time when we noticed a 12-year-old Southern White girl in the neighborhood "doing tricks," almost daily, with a man in his

fifties, dressed in a three-piece suit and driving a sedan. It was, of course, shocking that so young a girl was into prostitution. It was even more shocking that the mother was promoting and encouraging her daughter's behavior.

I recall on one occasion observing the man in the suit drive up and honk his horn. This time, as the 12-year-old was not at home, the mother and two younger siblings came out the front door to greet him and invite him into the house; and in he went as though he were a visiting uncle. There is nothing more to report. My imagination tells me they had an adult conversation over coffee. It is the confusion of it all that left me in a lasting turmoil. Where were the boundaries? What were families for if they did not protect their young from this kind of exploitation?

I began to think troubled thoughts about the whole neighborhood. It seemed that child abuse, in varying degrees, was happening in almost every household. From this I drew a connection to the increasing number of younger women "working" Michigan Avenue and Fort Street. I would now say, based partly on what others are saying, that sexual child abuse is integral to the culture of the Street. (It also happens in the Mainstream but is not integral to it.)

I also saw that we were confronting something more than a series of problems to be solved. We were inside an enveloping mystery -- like the night itself, something all around us but nothing to grab hold of. Indeed, like someone in a horror movie, I began to shiver at the night air. The neighborhood, no longer merely a place of deprived circumstances, became for me the sinister underworld of the Street. I even imagined St. Peter's in flames for daring to think about "doing something." Only gradually did I step out of my fear and name the darkness.

Death is a sign, a countersign to

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John Meyer is rector of St. Peter's, Detroit.

Life. Here we are thinking sacramentally and Biblically, even mythologically. In Biblical terms, Death is both a *power* and an *enemy*. Death, given the chance, would capture and rule the moral high ground and become the truth about life, the controlling metaphor.

Sexual child abuse, which functions as a rite of initiation into the Street, is a baptism unto Death. It claims to tell you who you are -- that "You are a child of confusion!" "You have no future!" "Your mother is the Night!" -- but never calls you by name. The average child or adult in our neighborhood must survive a blizzard of such signs. It is on this level that the Church is called to respond.

We have come to see our life and ministry as a contest of will with Death. It is what gives focus to all that we do, whether the soup kitchen in our basement, the program for girls, the worship of the congregation, or the repairs on the boiler. It is important to know that our main thrust is on the level of signs.

First, the most basic sign: St. Peter's perseveres on its corner despite the fact that it is itself an endangered species and careens on the edge of viability. But the important thing is the promise, that the "powers of Death will not prevail against the Church." Staying put on our corner, and not fleeing, is the precondition of the promise.

Second, we do a lot of baptizing. Baptism is a powerful sign in itself -- the sign of victory of Life over Death -- but must be seen then in competition with other signs, the countersigns of Death, which it is intended to trump. It is remarkable that so many from our girls' program, on their own initiative, request baptism for themselves or for their babies.

Third, following on the above, we try to be unambiguous about the value

October 1991



John the Baptist

credit: Dierdre Luzwick

of life. "Despite the stained sheets that you may die on, no matter what you did or didn't do, your life was not a mistake: it was worth living. The meaning of life flows from the resurrection of Jesus and not from achieving something in the Mainstream." It is easy to let the fog of confusion settle in and obscure this.

Fourth, we have developed, in conjunction with others, ministries that are street-related. We have already mentioned the soup kitchen. More recently

we have undertaken a shelter and related programming directed towards girls and young women on the Street (*St. Peter's Inn* and *Alternatives for Girls*).

Thus "standing up to Death" means that when we intervene on behalf of a girl, we are not merely rendering a service, but engaging in struggle with Death. We are choosing Life. The same could be said for the soup kitchen as it ladles out soup or for the congregation as it prays and sings.

TW

SOSAD

Save Our Sons And Daughters

by Mary West

On the wall of Vera Rucker's office hangs a framed arrangement of wallet-sized photographs. From a distance, it looks like the class picture from a high school yearbook. But these faces -- some smiling, others solemn -- were not brought together by school spirit. They are boys and girls who died of gunshot wounds.

Vera Rucker is chairperson of Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD). Founded by Clementine Barfield in January, 1987, SOSAD brings together families and friends of some of the 1,500-plus children aged 16 and younger shot in Detroit since 1986. One hundred ninety-five of these died, including Vera Rucker's daughter, Melody.

Dressed in a baseball cap and softball team tee shirt, Vera Rucker describes Melody as an active and outgoing child. She ran track, played basketball and volleyball, acted in school plays and served on the youth task force of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan. Melody "had her little tempers," her mother recalls, but would quickly "make up for it, writing little notes, making phone calls." She could get "mouthy" with her two broth-

Mary West is an emergency care nurse at Detroit Receiving, a founder of the Catholic Worker house in Detroit and a member of the Detroit Pastoral Alliance.

Herb Gunn is editor of *The Record* of the Diocese of Michigan.

ers, pestering and arguing. Her mother says she planned to be a lawyer.

On the night of August 19, 1986, Melody went to a friend's house for a back-to-school party. Some young men crashed the party and were forced to leave, then returned with guns and fired into a group of teenagers. Three of the teenagers died.

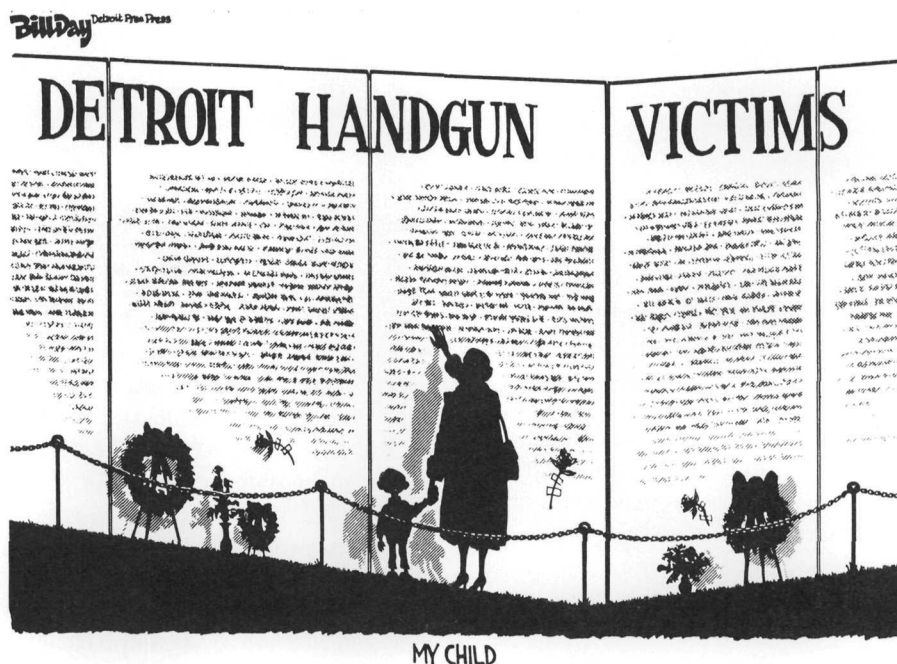
The hours Vera Rucker spent at the emergency room became "the longest wait of my life." The doctor came out to



Melody Rucker, an Episcopal teen, was killed by random gunfire.

report on Melody's condition. Rucker remembers her sister and cousin running past her, crying. Then Rucker was allowed to view the body of her lively, expressive child. "One side of her face was destroyed. She looked like a monster."

Rucker describes her grief as a feeling that "a part of my heart was cut away." People expressed their sympathy in many comforting ways. But to those



credit: Bill Day, the Detroit Free Press

who said to her, "I know how you feel," Rucker responded that they could not know how she felt if they had not lost a child to violence. "I said, 'I hope you never know how it is I feel.'"

Soon after, Rucker began to hear and read about Clementine Barfield, another mother in Detroit whose son had been shot and killed. "Mrs. Barfield shed some tears and then set out to do something." Rucker's belief that they - the police, city officials -- should take action against street violence was challenged. "I realized that I was part of the 'they.'" When Clementine Barfield was the guest on a radio talk show, Vera Rucker called in. From that connection, along with contacts made with other grieving mothers, a movement of relatives and friends of slain children began to take shape.

At first, they simply met in one another's homes "to just embrace and talk and share." SOSAD now organizes many programs against violence and in support of families and communities. A monthly newsletter is published. Marches are organized for Pentecost and Father's Day. Prayer services are held to memorialize the children. Conflict resolution workshops and leadership training are offered to groups of young people. Family support groups, a male grief support group, adult and children's grief counseling groups meet on a regular basis.

Vera Rucker compares violence to "a sore steadily growing over time." Although she does not expect it to be resolved overnight, she remains hopeful about SOSAD's original goal of preventing the spread of violence. "If I could say or do anything to help one person not to go through what I've gone through," then the effort has been worthwhile.

Occasionally what she goes through is anger. "I think God understands when we ask 'Why me?'" Rucker has not seen the young man convicted of her daughter's murder since he was sentenced to



Vera Rucker, Melody's mother, takes to the streets opposing handguns and preaching reconciliation.

credit: Herb Gunn

prison, but she has stayed in touch with his mother and grandmother. When asked what she would say to him now, five years after her daughter's death, she says, "I would tell him that I don't hate him; that I hope he gets his life together."

Vera Rucker is leery of Christians who offer the ritual kiss of peace, then divide into cliques or recede into passivity once Sunday services are over. She has begun to explore the Scriptures at her parish's Wednesday evening Bible study and is finding themes about

struggle and unity. "I used to be afraid of the Bible. Now I'm beginning to look at Scripture differently." In the first class, Rucker's Bible study group discussed the book of Joshua, and the gathering of 12 stones from the dry bed of the Jordan River, one stone for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Through SOSAD, Vera Rucker's work is a kind of gathering of the city's lost tribes: victims and victimizers, blacks and whites, the wealthy and the poor, all those blessed faces at last together in a portrait of the living.

TW

The Unions: from Motown to Mexico

by Jane Slaughter

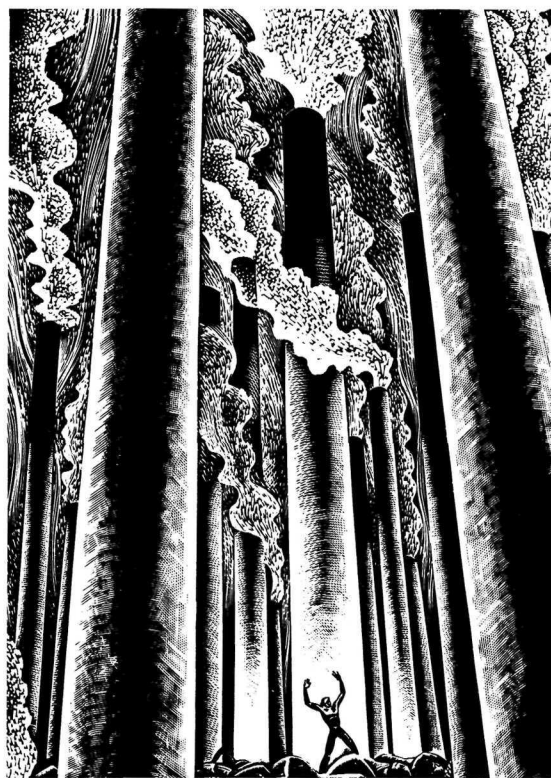
Fifteen years ago, Black Detroiters, fathers and mothers, made a good living working in the plants and believed that their children could do the same. It was hard work but it was good money for those without formal skills or a lot of education. Today, no east side Chrysler worker believes that his son will follow him into the factory; he only hopes that his plant -- now moved to the suburbs -- and he himself can hang on until retirement. No Detroit teenager believes there is a decent job waiting for him; the result is the despair which engulfs blocks and neighborhoods.

Like refugees from some natural disaster, Detroiters have watched in disbelief as their lives have been turned upside down. Since the 1950s Detroit has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. Many auto jobs have been eliminated permanently. Others have been exported.

In the 1980s Detroit auto workers were known for their intolerance of foreigners when the question was jobs. As Japanese imports took a larger and larger share of the market, anti-Japanese sentiment ran high. The International UAW would not allow Japanese cars in its parking lot. Some local unions distributed bumperstickers with such sentiments as "Remember Pearl Harbor!" and "Park your car in Tokyo." The ugliness

Jane Slaughter is author of *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept* and an editor of *Labor Notes*.

reached a peak in 1982 with the death of Vincent Chin, who was Chinese-American. Yelling, "Because of you, we're out of work," a Chrysler foreman beat Chin to death with a baseball bat outside a Highland Park bar.



credit: Lynd Ward

Now, after a decade of line speedups and job loss in the U.S., some American auto workers are looking for partners instead of scapegoats. Members of the New Directions union movement brought a Mexican auto worker to Detroit last year.

Marco Antonio Jimenez, who lives

in Mexico City, spoke before 1,200 of his fellow auto workers in Detroit. Jimenez, along with 11 other union leaders, was fired from Ford's Cuautitlan plant in June 1989 when the company tried to cut short a workers' movement against wage cuts and speedup. Apparently feeling that the \$50 per week Cuautitlan workers earn building Cougars and Thunderbirds is too much, Ford is out to bust their union.

Jimenez received two standing ovations during his short speech, which was translated from Spanish. He was greeted as a brother by the crowd of United Auto Workers members.

Today U.S. auto workers are suffering because multinational corporations can pay workers in Mexico's older plants (like the one where Jimenez worked) \$10 a day; the mostly teenage women in the newer *maquiladora* parts plants near the border are paid \$4 to \$7. There are over half a million *maquiladora* workers. A new plant opens every day, and their numbers are expected to double by 1995.

Despite the Mexican government's prosperity propaganda, Mexico has been subjected to an austerity program during the last decade which has driven wages down in preparation for the pending Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.

Between 1982 and 1987, 700,000 jobs were lost. Of those, 200,000 were lost when the government privatized or liquidated state enterprises in preparation for the open market. In 1981, 240,000 higher-paying jobs in the traditional auto industry -- producing for domestic consumption -- were eliminated. Another 130,000 were eliminated in 1986, while employment of auto *maquiladoras*, which produce only for export, grew from none in 1980 to 125,000 today. Jimenez

THE WITNESS

is part of a democratic movement in the Ford workers' union which is battling the government-dominated Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM). New Directions members too feel that their union in the U.S. is often more attentive to management's needs than to their own. Their movement was founded to fight both for union democracy and against what they see as an anti-worker corporate agenda.

They are the ones who organized Jimenez's tour of auto plants in five U.S. cities; who held a small demonstration outside Ford headquarters to protest the murder of Cuautitlan worker Cleto Nigno by CTM thugs; who gathered signatures on petitions against the Free Trade Agreement; who traveled to Mexico to meet with their counterparts firsthand.

They include Ron Maxwell, a rank and filer at Ford's Utica Trim plant outside Detroit, who has already seen 70 door panel jobs from his shop disappear to Mexico. Maxwell, who was born in Tennessee and raised in the Motor City, says, "They're pitting auto worker against auto worker, instead of putting the blame where it really belongs, on the corporations. If we don't get people involved in what's going on we're not going to be strong as a union."

Even if union leaders in the U.S. were willing to wage an all-out fight -- which they are not -- capital is likely to win this round. Those who care about Detroit can only hope that out of the solidarity activity that is beginning with the tiny steps described above, a movement can grow which will eventually be strong enough to take on all the forces which are contributing to Detroit's misery.

Ron Maxwell and the New Directions activists he works with are taking the long view. They know their only hope for a long-term solution is to support Latin American workers and Asian workers in their fight for a living wage. It is on this openness and this understanding that the future of Detroit auto workers depends.

TW

Military Pollution

The world's armed forces are the single largest polluter on earth, and the U.S. military annually produces more toxins than the top five chemical companies combined, according to a new report by World Priorities, a nonprofit research group in Washington, D.C. The report, "World Military and Social Expenditures, 1991," also contends that four out of five cancers are linked directly or indirectly to environmental causes, that pesticides are causing one million serious human poisonings a year, and that one-fifth of humanity lives in areas where the air is unfit to breathe.

For the cost of a nuclear-armed submarine (\$2 billion) a worldwide citizens' program could begin to reforest the earth, the report maintains, and for \$5 billion a year -- the cost of six Stealth bombers -- a significant reduction in global air pollution could be achieved.

The Human Quest 9-10/91

Bishops Criticize Drug War

Bolivia's Roman Catholic bishops criticized the joint U.S.-Bolivian anti-drug strategy in a May statement which attacked corruption in the government and private sector and emphasized the church's preferential option for the poor.

The U.S. congress has approved sending military advisors to Bolivia to work with the country's armed forces in the war on drugs.

Outside intervention and the use of force should be avoided, the bishops said.

They defended coca growing and the traditional use of the plant by campesinos, but also proposed substituting equally profitable crops for coca.

At present, they said, poor growers "can barely survive on what little land they have," while "those who obtain huge profits from this underground economy enjoy impunity and protection offered to them by the powerful and influential."

One World 8-9/91

Flowers for the Soviets

The American Friends Service Committee

sent a bouquet of roses to the Soviet Embassy in Washington applauding the successful nonviolent opposition to the August Soviet military coup. The accompanying message saluted the Soviet people, saying that "What they have achieved through nonviolent resistance inspires us all and increases hopes for peace throughout the world."

In a public statement, the AFSC called for "new defense-cutting initiatives in both the United States and the Soviet Union," and urged the United States and other western governments to allow the Soviet people to determine their relationship to central state authority, "bearing in mind the importance of respecting and guaranteeing the rights of minorities."

AFSC News Release, 8/91

What's Missing for U.S. Families

"It may be hard to understand what's missing in U.S. family policy unless you know what's taken for granted almost everywhere

else in the industrialized world.

Writing in *Mothering* (Spring 1991), Amy Kaplan presents a detailed study of direct family benefits in five countries -- Hungary, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States. Four of the five countries offer a paid leave for between three and nine months, at the birth of a child at between 90 and 100 percent of salary, plus the option of additional leave with less pay. Four of the five nations studied also have policies that provide tax incentives like family allowances, childcare allowances, income replacement while caring for a sick child, and universal income-support programs. It's no surprise that the United States is the one that has none of these family supports."

Monika Bauerlein in *Utne Reader*, 9-10/91

Short takes

Detroit has always been for me a state of mind, a mixture of hope and lost opportunities, of dirt and despair, of shiny new automobiles and unimaginably long unemployment lines. As a boy, I regularly visited the city. My favorite aunt and a large, extended family lived in the suburban community of Inkster. When summer rolled around, we trekked north to the mecca of Motown.

Hundreds of thousands of African-American families from Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi had flooded into the city during the 1940s and 1950s, searching to escape rigid racial segregation and the penury of sharecropping. Detroit seemed an ideal place for black opportunities. There was by the end of World War II a small but growing black entrepreneurial and professional class. Black enterprises such as Barry Gordy's Motown were influential. By the sixties, it was no longer unusual to see African-Americans in some positions of importance in the school system, government

and in smaller numbers, inside white businesses.

But a rigid system of racial apartheid and police violence permeated the entire community. At the city's northern boundary, Eight Mile Road represented a racial version of the Berlin Wall. White realtors in the suburbs, as a rule, refused to sell homes to blacks, regardless of their income, education or credit. The city's police force was brutal in its harassment and victimization of black citizens.

In the automobile plants, the system of racial exploitation for blacks was commonly called "niggermentation." At Dodge Main plant, for example, 99 percent of the general foremen were white, 100 percent of the plant superintendents were white, and 90 percent of all skilled tradesmen and apprentices were white. Blacks received the worst jobs at the lowest levels of pay; my cousins and their friends were always assigned to the very worst and dirtiest jobs -- in the engine assembly area, the body shop and the foundry. It was unusual to find a black autoworker with more than 15 years of experience who had not already suffered some crippling accident, such as the loss of a finger or an eye.

The urban uprising of 1967 pushed thousands of middle-income whites out of the city, fearful of their lives and property. Large corporations began a pattern of "milking" their industries inside the city limits, reallocating their profits from local consumers to new firms based in the all-white suburbs or in the sunbelt. Economic decay overtook Detroit by the 1970s. Schools declined as the tax base

fell. A drop in jobs meant that low-income people turned to illegal drugs, prostitution and other forms of illegal activity. The city's core became unlivable for the black middle class, and many moved to the suburbs. By the 1970s and 1980s.

Other people of color began to move into the city. African-Americans had never really found. The largest group of new immigrants were Syrians, and later the Palestinians, Iraqis and Saudis. By 1990, nearly 200,000 Arab-Americans lived in Detroit. They came despite many common economic and political interferences, such as meetings or cultural events because they fear being discriminated against for jobs, because the corporations have relocated their operations.

The challenge of rebuilding and resurrecting Detroit was a national policy of urban reconstruction for the 21st century. It was a policy of attacking and uprooting widespread

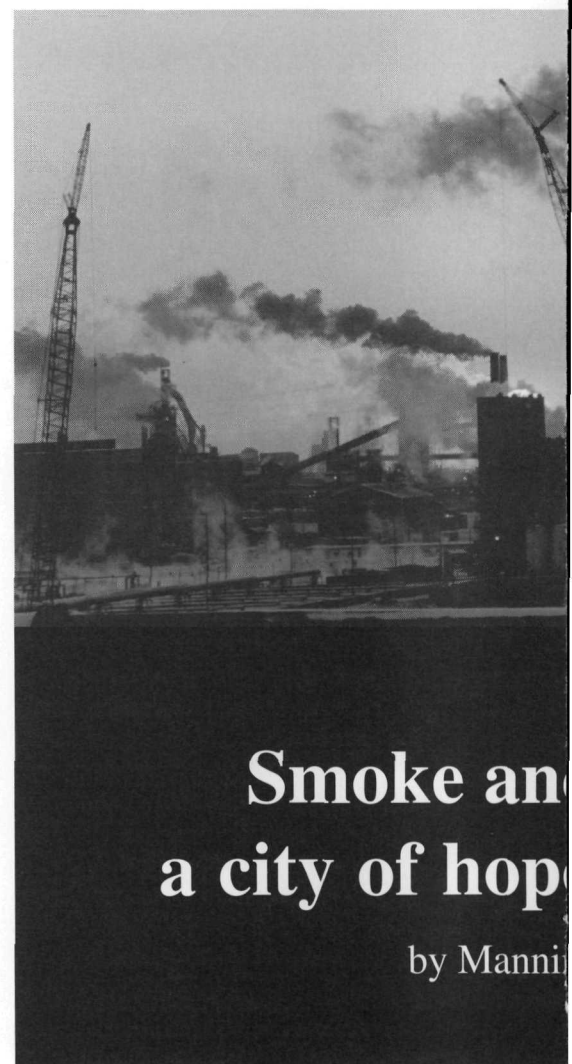


Detroit auto worker and his daughter

credit: Jim West

Manning Marable is a professor of history and political science at the University of Colorado, an author, a serialized columnist and contributing editor to *The Witness*.

Jim West is a freelance photographer and an editor of *Labor Notes*.



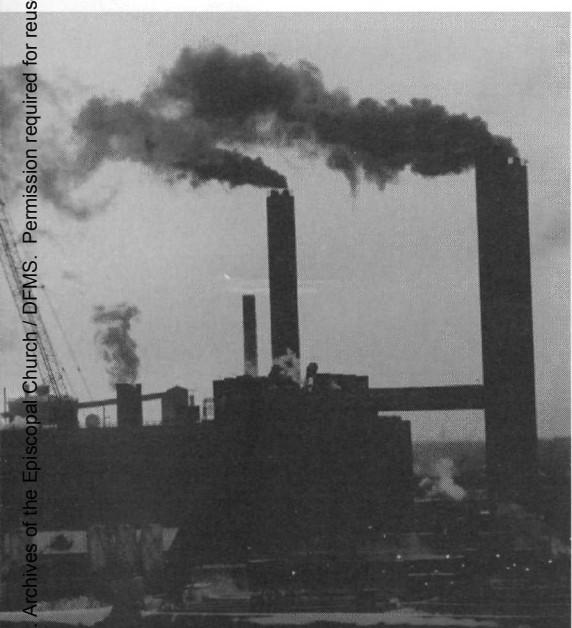
Smoke and a city of hope

by Manning

had to rely on the underground economy of hustling, activity, simply to survive. Rapidly, Detroit's central which began to relocate to neighborhoods adjacent

searching for the same opportunities which African-consisted of Arab-Americans. First the Lebanese and established an economic and cultural infrastructure. in the greater Detroit-Dearborn area. Unfortunately, relderly are afraid to go out at night to attend civic mugged and robbed; the poor have ceased to look for offices beyond the reach of public transportation.

oi it seems to me, should be the cornerstone of a new, enury. Because if we could turn around the problems ea poverty, generating new jobs and new hopes, we



d Mirrors: e and illusion

ng Marable

might be able to see progress in every other city.

Part of this strategy must be economic. Religious groups and foundations could help finance community-controlled corporations, which provide investment capital, technical advice and business expertise to community cooperatives and minority small entrepreneurs. We need to restructure welfare programs to reward, rather than punish, unmarried women with children with initiative to go back to school and obtain job skills. We must employ federal government resources to expand and to strengthen the so-called safety net, providing a decent living wage to

those who cannot work, and an expanded housing program to address the problems of the homeless.

Part of the solution must also be educational. For decades, many black educators have argued that the violence and socially-destructive behavior which one witnesses in our inner-cities demands a new approach toward the education of young people. The chaos outside the boundaries of our schools, the drugs and crime, destroy the self-esteem and constructive social values which help to give any community a sense of itself. Young black males, especially in single, female-headed households, lack black male adult role models in their lives.

Clifford Watson, an elementary school principal in Detroit, has advanced a proposal which attempts to address these problems. The original plan envisioned the creation of three grade schools, in-



The Detroit auto show

credit: Jim West

volving a total of 560 inner-city youths. The schools' proposed names -- Malcolm X Academy, Marcus Garvey Academy, and Paul Robeson Academy -- were designed to reinforce a sense of "Afrocentrism" -- racial pride, historical and cultural consciousness within African and African-American traditions. Special Saturday classes and tutorials were planned in specific areas, such as mathematics and the sciences. Anchoring this program would be the presence of articulate and culturally-aware black male educators, serving as mentors, instructors and disciplinarians. In the proposal, the Robeson Academy was to be all-male, with the other schools making this transition over a period of time. Last February, the Detroit School Board reviewed the controversial proposal, and approved it by a vote of 10 to one.

Opposition surfaced from several

quarters. The American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organization for Women Legal Defense Fund went to Federal district court this August to successfully block the implementation of the plan, fundamentally on the grounds that it discriminated against black female students. The Michigan branch of the ACLU's executive director, Howard Simon, argued "These schools may open up a whole new world for these boys. That world should be open to girls too."

Watson countered in television interviews that the particular manifestations of this urban crisis were particularly devastating to young black males, who comprise the overwhelming majority of those engaged in criminal activity and violence in the city, and 90 percent of all

students expelled from the school system. Black feminists and others aligned with NOW's Legal Defense Fund and the ACLU were characterized as "Uncle Toms" or the active agents of white supremacy.

Where some Afrocentric educators such as Watson err is their argument that a system of instruction which specifically excludes black females will contribute constructively to an environment in which young black males can be saved. A coeducational setting could accomplish even more,

all things being equal. Young black males could be challenged to interact with their sisters not from the basis of male chauvinism but with respect. They could

begin to acquire the values essential in a responsible approach to social relations, including sexuality and child raising. By dividing their project on the basis of sex, they indirectly contribute to the tensions and contradictions

If we could turn around the problems of this crucial city, attacking and uprooting widespread poverty, generating new jobs and new hopes, we might be able to see progress in every other city.

--Manning Marable

which already fuel problems between black males and females -- which is directly against the interests of the African-American community as a whole.

The struggle to save Detroit, and other cities like it, cannot be viewed in narrow, political, economic or educational terms. The larger question we must confront is our attitude toward human beings of different ethnic identities, cultures, religions, and lifestyles than ourselves. Is there a moral and ethical responsibility which links those living in the comfortable confines of the suburbs with families struggling to survive the rats, roaches and crackdealers on their local street corners? Is it sufficient for churches to donate canned goods for Christmas, or to invite a black choir to Sunday morning services? One cannot embrace the pain of the poor from a distance; one cannot understand the outrage of young black and Latino teenagers who desperately are searching for work and self-respect, just by voting for liberals at election time. Detroit is a symbol for the vast class and racial chasm which cuts across our country. Our ability to remove the barriers of inequality which still plague millions of poor, unemployed and minority people is simultaneously a test of our political resolve and spirituality.

TW

Detroit has the largest Arab population outside of the Middle East. More than 200,000 people, speaking 52 different dialects, emigrated to Detroit.

The first to arrive were Christians from Lebanon and Syria who assimilated quickly, and opening markets. Later arrivals, largely Muslim, found work in the Ford Rouge plant.

"There was a unity here," explained Ishmael Ahmed, director of the Arab-American Community Center for Economic and Social Services. "Everybody needed work and everybody did not know the language."

The desire to assimilate into U.S. culture was brought up short during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Ahmed said.

In the 1970s, Arab workers learned that the UAW was buying Israeli government bonds. Twenty caucuses were organized and Chrysler's Dodge Main plant was shut down when workers marched on then UAW president Leonard Woodcock. They secured promises that all bonds would be sold. Ahmed noted that ironically Chrysler had hired so many Arabs at Dodge Main to dilute the radical influence of the Black Revo-



A children's art show at the Arab Center this summer was aborted when someone set fire to the building after killing a center employee.

credit: Laura McGuire, Dearborn Times Herald

lutionary Union Movement.

"People came here very suspicious about the United States and with a certain self-respect," Ahmed said. "The civil rights movement for the Chicanos and Blacks had a direct effect. People started thinking we have a right to preserve our culture."

During the Gulf War, the Arab community was conflicted about the war, concerned for family members abroad and worried about persecution by U.S. "super patriots."

J.W.-K.



Curtistine Hooper is baptized in the Detroit River.

credit: Liz Rogers

'Rain your spirit in my heart'

by Ruth Seymour

From beside the old piano at the front of the sanctuary, Catrina Ganey scanned faces in the pews. Nine residents from neighborhood half-way houses, five black professionals and seven young, white Birkenstockers.

Up into the gothic rafters climbed

Ganey's voice, a strong gospel praise backed by guitar, a simple song that both the half-way house adults and other worshippers joined confidently and hungrily.

The church's acoustics sent back a sound that was gentle, welcoming, full.

"Thank you Jesus, praise you Lord

Jesus," Ganey sighed into the microphone at song's end, unleashing a rustle of similar praises through the flock.

Need. Response. Power. Another Sunday service at Church of the Messiah in Detroit. Somehow, fewer and fewer members are achieving more and more. One wonders what on earth could

make this small Christian community lose steam.

Not the disbanding of dozens of shared households after a decade's effort.

Not this decade's membership decline from 100 active parishioners to 25. (Sunday services now draw 90 people - ten years ago the congregation was twice that size.)

Not the death by stabbing of a young parishioner during her afternoon nap in the church's rehabilitated apartments.

Certainly not car thefts and petty vandalisms.

In a neighborhood sickened by decades of joblessness, narcotics, violence and unrecycled lives, about 25 Messiah members like Ganey are still hanging on.

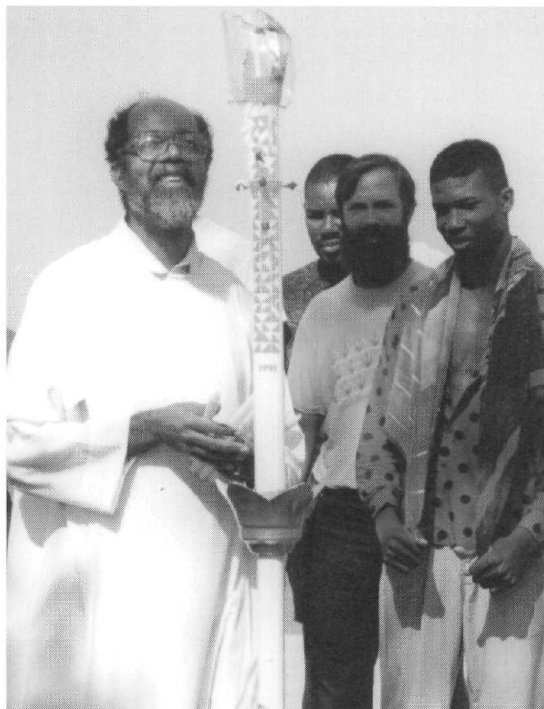
And they are producing:

*** \$4 million in neighborhood housing development in the last five years.** With public, private and congregational dollars, the church has refurbished more than 145 living units, including four apartment buildings, trained residents in cooperative management and turned over the first building to cooperative resident control.

Ground is to be broken this winter for 12 town houses, the first new housing to rise in this neighborhood for years.

*** Improved math and reading scores among neighborhood children.** Before- and after-tests showed an average increase of about two grade levels in academic skills for students attending the church's after-school

study halls. The church also sponsors evening youth groups, Girl Scouts and a summer work program. "Without Messiah, I might be selling drugs, I might be doing anything," says 19-year-old Manuel Rios, an easy-smiling young man with hair greased back into a duck tail.



Ron Spann, rector of Messiah, raises the paschal candle.
credit: Liz Rogers

*** Annual delivery of 80,000 pounds (100 bags per week) of fresh fruits, staples, meats and vegetables to senior citizens.** Church members also paved a corner lot for a basketball court and host early Sunday coffee hours to help mentally impaired congregants preview the upcoming service.

The Messiah crew aren't saints, really. They are just normal people, with other jobs. All 25 of them. And they say their numbers are starting to grow again. That maybe, by now, they're reaching 30.

"I think that is what makes Messiah so special," says Gwendolyn McNeal,

41, whom the rector calls "Superwoman -- secretary for United Way by day and phenomenal grass roots organizer" by night.

"You have a few people doing significant things, really making a difference," McNeal says.

Ganey, for one, is a hospital chaplain and college drama instructor. When she first visited Church of the Messiah during a nasty rainstorm three years ago, she stood on the porch dripping and wondering whether to walk inside. Half of the congregants (then, as today) were from nearby adult foster care homes. Some were dishevelled, disoriented and smelled funny.

"I thought, 'Oh, my gosh what *is* this place,'" she recalls. "It looked weird. I had never been in a place where people dressed like *that* sat by people, quote, unquote, *looking good*. I was also struck by the interracialness of it.

"But I felt something drawing me in. I felt: This is what the Kingdom of God is going to look like."

* * *

November 1971: Just 15 months out of seminary (Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge) Ron Spann became rector to the disappearing Church of the Messiah on the near east-side of Detroit.

A few white elderly parishioners had been struggling for years to keep their doors open, without a pastor, and in a racially turned-over neighborhood.

Span was in his late 20s, politicized, single and fresh from a charismatic conversion. His goal: Build a Detroit arrangement similar to the burgeoning charismatic Redeemer community of 400 adults and children in urban Houston.

Build he did. From an Episcopalian and decidedly charismatic base, the Messiah community mushroomed in shared households, community economics and cooperative government

THE WITNESS

Ruth Seymour is director of the Journalism Institute for Minorities at Wayne State University.

Liz Rogers, an artist, lived in the Messiah community for two years and recently moved to study sculpting at the New York Academy of Fine Arts.

peaked in 1980, there were 95-100 adults sharing homes within four blocks of the church.

Spann is black; most of his community converts were "white, young, college-educated liberals wanting to be a part of a church doing something in the community," says Messiah member Liz Rogers.

Members contributed their entire incomes to a common purse, which paid rent and food and individual allowances of up to \$10 per month. Some maintained jobs to finance the church's efforts; others contributed skills to neighborhood needs. The church founded a day care center and school, as well as a painting and plastering company that employed neighborhood residents and a housing development corporation.

"Rather than living in the world and going to church we were living in church and going out into the world," Spann says. "We were asking a lot of ourselves, sometimes unwisely."

And yet even this inflow of hope could not turn back the creeping urban tide of poverty, desperation and crime. And, as with other communitarian efforts around the country and world during the 1980s, Spann said, internal energy and commitment began to flag.

"People married, had kids, and with these tender babies, they wanted to get out of the neighborhood. They said, 'Oh my God, my child could get killed,'" Rogers explained.

Still, no one was prepared for the murder.

Michelle Rougeau, Spann recalls, was a neurosurgical nurse, "an off-the-scale extrovert. A lively, attractive, warm person -- kids just flocked around her -- from a big French Catholic family."

After 10 years in Messiah's common households, Rougeau moved into the St. Paul Manor, an apartment building which the church had restored. One morning, she took neighborhood children to a

prayer service at the gates of a local defense contractor. That afternoon, she took a nap at home. "A child of one of the church members walked in, since Michelle never locked her door, and found the body," Spann said.

The entire Messiah community reeled. "I had never suffered such a loss," Spann says. "And if there was any way we had repressed our anxieties about the violence that stalks this neighborhood, you could not repress it then."

The hemorrhaging of membership out



Some of the newly baptised: Kaellen Weld-Wallis, Justin and Daniel Cannon.

credit: Liz Rogers

of the church community continued.

But even in the midst of that decline, even as good-bye parties became more the norm than baptisms, a new center of gravity began to emerge. Black membership from the neighborhood began to climb.

Donald Softley, 42-year-old director of East Side Initiative, a community agency serving 40,000 residents, is one of those who has joined Messiah in the last few years. Today he is board president of the Church of the Messiah Housing Corporation.

"Messiah had this reputation in the community for being a caring active church in terms of helping people satisfy human needs," he said. "I was looking

for a church that was committed beyond itself."

Spann, too, had been rethinking his church's vision.

He spent a year on sabbatical among fellow black theologians in Atlanta. And he thought often of his 1984 trip to Nicaragua. There, he recalled, he had seen "people enjoying what I had seen black people enjoying during the late '60s and '70s in this country -- some sense of destiny," he said.

"I had heard 16-year-old kids who could quote Che Guevara. I realized that was not true for 16-year-old kids around the neighborhood of Messiah. And so we began taking the youth ministry in new directions."

Church study halls began promoting individual tutoring after school. Evening youth groups discussed raw neighborhood problems as well as generating championship interchurch sports teams.

Spann began more energetically infusing Gospel and black culture into church services, while provoking members, black and white, to examine the role race was playing in their own congregation.

"It would seem," says Spann, "that if there is enough power to get Jesus out of the dead, it must be peanuts to break down divisions between men and women, black and white, right?"

After Rougeau's murder, one Detroit newspaper columnist likened Messiah's membership to a bunch "of Lutheran seminary volunteers in Tanzania," Spann recalled. The analogy infuriated church members at the time.

Today, interracial trust and teamwork is a dominant trait of the Messiah community. But occasional cultural discom-

forts still confound the core group. The congregation has even broken at times into a "pepper" group and a "salt" group to talk things through.

For one thing, some members say, there has been an irritatingly subtle presumption in and around Messiah that middle-class whites who live in the neighborhood are somehow more heroic than blacks.

"We have fears for our children, too," spurts McNeal. There is anger in her smooth voice. "Because some of us are black it does not make it any easier."

"You can pray together and live together and all the things human beings do with each other," Softley says, "but the fact that you are of different races will always be there."

Ultimately, however, when the faces of Messiah turn outward, the cry of social needs drowns out inner frictions. The chemistry of Messiah, from the start, has depended on the inner turning out. It is the spilling of one community's

good into another.

"For everyone involved, that struggle creates a kind of togetherness that transcends race," Softley says.

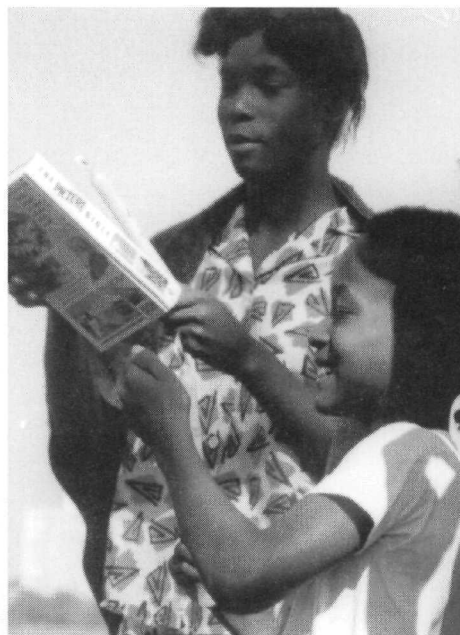
* * *

The Detroit river is navy blue in the morning; seaweeds frame the shore like braids of hair.

The Church of the Messiah has gathered on an island between Canada and Detroit to baptize new members.

A female priest, Susan Boch, speaks: "This is our family, gathered at its heart."

And again: "Gaze into the candle's



Curtistine and Curtis Hooper hold symbols of their new life in Christ: a candle and a Bible.

credit: Liz Rogers

flame and see our deliverance. This is a story of how God's hope and joy for us are stronger than anything in our lives."

The man in his low-slung black knit cap looks up and almost reveals his eyes. A woman in the front row lights the last half of a cigarette.

Across a grass aisle, on blankets and sheets, ten children await ritual -- fresh, self-conscious, excited.

Godparents-to-be

grab smaller hands as 60 people trudge across warm morning sand, the church body briefly swollen with visiting families and friends and two dogs on leashes.

As its children wade waist-high into the river to be drenched under a crockery pitcher, the church sings and claps: "*Rain your spirit down in my heart, rain, Master Jesus, rain...*" Emergent, dripping, the children are one-by-one swallowed into church family.

Each child holds up a flickering candle to symbolize a new undying life in Christ. Predictably, strong gusts of wind toss away some of the little flames. Predictably, Messiah's children defy the wind; they turn readily to each other's flames to keep all candles glowing.

TW

City Nights

by Naomi Long Madgett

My windows and doors are barred
against the intrusion of thieves.
The neighbors' dogs howl in pain
at the screech of sirens.
There is nothing you can tell me
about the city
I do not know.

On the front porch it is cool and quiet
after the high pitched panic passes.
The windows across the street gleam
in the dark.

There is a faint suggestion of moon-shadow
above the golden street light.
The grandchildren are asleep upstairs
and we are happy for their presence.

The conversation comes around to Grampa Henry
thrown into the Detroit River by an Indian woman
seeking to save him from the sinking ship.
(Or was he the one who was the African prince
employed to oversee the chained slave-cargo,
preventing their rebellion, and for reward set free?)
The family will never settle it; somebody lost
the history they had so carefully preserved.

Insurance rates are soaring.
It is not safe to walk the streets at night.
The news reports keep telling us the things
they need to say: The case
is hopeless.

But the front porch is cool and quiet.
The neighbors are dark and warm.
The grandchildren are upstairs dreaming
and we are happy for their presence.

(Excerpts and Entrances, Lotus Press, Detroit)

Swords into Plowshares, Tanks into Artworks

by Blaise Tobia & Virginia Maksymowicz

Detroit is one of only three cities in the nation featuring a gallery dedicated fully to showing art concerned peace and justice issues (the others are Chicago and Albuquerque). Swords into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery is situated downtown, next to the Detroit Council On the Arts, and draws a diverse audience of people in the arts, church people, politically active people and just plain people off the street.

"Why the arts and peace?," wrote Jim Bristah, the gallery's founder and director, in an article for *The Other Side* magazine. "The arts reach into our feelings, into the deeper levels of our being... The arts are universal, the needed per-

spective if there is to be peace. Art can play the role of conscience and, like the prophets, break open realities that a society ignores, is unaware of, or has become insensitive to."

A retired Methodist minister, Bristah came up with the idea of using an empty storefront owned by Central United Methodist Church to create a space where visual artists, poets, musicians, nonartists and even children could gather to envision a more peaceful world. In 1985, Swords into Plowshares opened with an exhibit of 75 panels (all made in Michigan) of the Pentagon Peace Ribbon. Since then Bristah, his wife Jo, and a hard-working committee of volunteers have presented the work of artists from around the world. The gallery has been

so successful, and its staff so ready for the challenge, that it has recently moved into a larger space on the same block.

The currently exhibiting artists are noted political cartoonist Bill Day (*Detroit Free Press*) and Detroit mixed-media artist Eric Mesko. Their show,

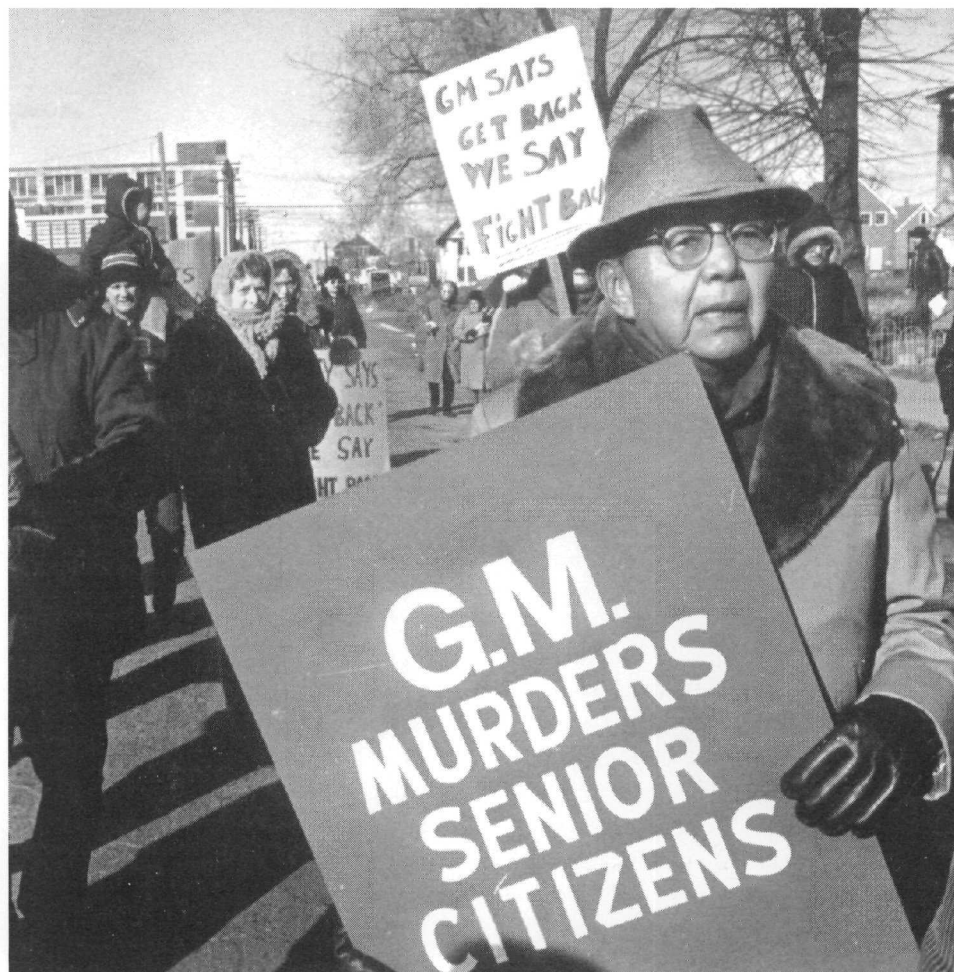


called "Art Wrought From Operation Desert Storm," juxtaposes 36 original cartoons by Day and an ambitious installation by Mesko that includes military weapons, videos, drawings and paintings. (The accompanying photograph shows just a small section of the installation, including part of a wall-size bank of television sets and a nearly life-size tank.)

For information call 313/965-54422.



credits: Eric Mesko, artist; Marilyn Zimmerman, photographer



credit: David C. Turnley

Making over Motown

by James Boggs

James Boggs worked on the Chrysler assembly line for 28 years and was active in the labor and black movements. He is the author of *American Revolution: Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook* and *Racism and the Class Struggle*. Boggs now participates in Detroiters' Uniting, a group projecting ideas for the future of Detroit.

David Turnley is an award-winning *Detroit Free Press* photographer stationed in Paris. His Poletown photography appeared in *Poletown: Community Betrayed* by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Eleven years ago, in the summer of 1980, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and General Motors Chairman Thomas Murphy announced that a new \$500 million Cadillac plant would be built in the center of Detroit, in the Hamtramck neighborhood known as Poletown. In order to build this "state of the art" factory (which would replace two older GM plants employing 15,000), 4200 residents would have to be displaced, and 1500 homes, 144

businesses and 16 churches bulldozed. The City of Detroit would also have to give GM a 12-year, 50 per cent property tax abatement and spend nearly \$300 million to clear the land and provide the plant with water, highways, sewage removal, etc. But, said the mayor, the deal was worth it because the Poletown plant would provide 6000 jobs ("It was a cheap price to pay for progress"); and besides, if the city did not comply with GM's demands before the 10-month deadline, it would go elsewhere.

At the time the project was opposed by what appeared to be only a small minority, primarily the people in the threatened community. At a series of public hearings, attended by thousands, residents spoke tearfully of how they had grown up and raised their families in this community, walked to school along its streets, been confirmed and married in its churches; and asked why residents were not allowed to vote on issues so critical to their lives. Against these ordinary working people were arrayed not only GM and the city administration but also the UAW, the majority of the City Council, and the Catholic Archdiocese (nearly half the Poletown residents were Catholic).

At first many of the Poletown homeowners could not believe that the city or state could condemn their property so callously. They had faith that if they spoke up and protested, the city and GM would relent and find some other site or reconfigure the plant so it could coexist with the neighborhood. But each week it became clearer that their protests were falling on deaf ears and that the city was going to use the right of eminent domain to take their property.

Meanwhile, the administration was resorting to all kinds of tricks to put pressure on homeowners and small businesses in the community to move. City services began to decline; garbage was

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collected infrequently or not at all; city lights would go off, encouraging vandalism and arson. Unemployed “demonstrators” were paid to march through the community shouting, “We want jobs.” Step by step the administration did its best to tear the community apart physically and morally. The end came in the middle of the night of July 14, 1981 when 60 police officers wrecked the Immaculate Conception Church, the headquarters of community resistance, arresting protesters who had been maintaining a vigil against the threatening demolition.

Looking back, the Poletown controversy can be seen as the beginning of a life and death struggle between politicians who still have the illusion that our cities can be saved by the same multinational corporations which have abandoned them, and a growing grassroots movement based on a human-scale vision of the city as a joining together of local communities, stores, schools and churches. The Poletown struggle inspired the formation of community groups and coalitions to resist corporate blackmail and to demand the allocation of federal and city funds to neighborhood development. In 1988 this grassroots movement achieved its first major success when Detroit voters rejected “Casino Gambling” despite the mayor’s promises that it would bring 50,000 jobs to the city. This April 23 an overwhelming majority voted No on Proposal A which would have sanctioned the rezoning of the riverfront Ford Auditorium site (meaning that the public auditorium would be destroyed) for private development.

At the same time, grassroots groups are coming together to begin rebuilding our communities. Some people are cleaning up their blocks and planting trees and gardens. Others are organizing marches and vigils to rid their neighborhoods of crime and drugs. Still others are taking over and rehabbing old and abandoned



In 1980, the city of Detroit condemned Poletown, an integrated, low-income neighborhood, to accommodate construction of a new General Motors’ Cadillac plant.

credit: David C. Turnley

houses, thus restoring to the tax rolls hundreds of properties that would otherwise have to be demolished with taxpayer monies. [Detroit has boasted the largest number of owner-occupied homes in the nation; now, it bulldozes 6,000 homes a year.]

The central question is “What is the purpose of a city?” Up to now, because

Looking back, the Poletown controversy can be seen as the beginning of a life and death struggle between politicians who still have the illusion that our cities can be saved by the same multinational corporations which have abandoned them, and a growing grassroots movement based on a human-scale vision of the city.

it has been our historical experience for the last 75 years, most Americans have thought of the city as a place to which you go for a job working for some big corporation after you have been driven off the land by mechanization. But now we know that the large industrial corporations are not going to provide those jobs for us.

What, then, is going to happen to the one million people still living in Detroit, half of them on some form of public assistance? We can’t go back to the farms. There are no new industries coming here to employ us. Therefore, if we are thinking about a future for Detroiters, if we are going to create hope especially for our young people, we must break with most of the ideas about cities that we have accepted in the past.

We have to stop seeing the city as just a place to which you come to make a living. Instead we must start seeing it as the place where our humanity is enriched because we have the opportunity to work and live in harmony with people of many different ethnic and social backgrounds. We have to see that our capital is in

people and not see people as existing to make capital for production or dependent on capital to live.

The foundation of our city has to be people living in communities who realize that their human identity is based on love and respect for one another and between different generations, and who have also learned from experience that they can no longer leave the decisions about their lives to the market place, to corporations or to politicians, regardless of ethnic background. We have to see ourselves as responsible for our city and for each other, and raise our children to place more value on social ties than on material

wealth. We have to see ourselves as agents of change and producers rather than as consumers or clients for services.

We have to get rid of the myth that there is something sacred about large-scale production for the national and international market. Actually, our experiences over the last 75 years have demonstrated that large-scale production, because it is based on a huge separation between production and consumption, makes both producers and consumers into faceless masses who are alienated from one another and at the mercy of market forces and the mass media. Instead we have to begin to create small enterprises which produce food, goods and services for the local market. Instead of destroying the skills of workers, which is what large-scale industry does, these small enterprises will combine craftsmanship, or the preservation and enhancement of human skills, with

the new technologies which make possible flexible production and constant readjustment to serve the needs of local consumers.

We need a view of our city which

purchase freshly-baked bread and food shops where working people can purchase whole meals to take home to eat together, instead of living off McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

We also need a fundamental change in our concept of schools. What kids learn in school today has little or no relationship to their communities. While they are growing up, they are like parasites doing no socially useful work. Then when they become teenagers we blame them because they have no

sense of social responsibility. We have to create schools in which young people acquire a sense of their own value be-

cause they naturally and normally do meaningful work for the community. Our goal should be to make Detroit the first city in the nation to use our schools to serve the community rather than as places where young people are upgraded to leave the community.

young people are upgraded to leave the community.

We can't keep running from city to city. But if we put down our roots where we are living, and put our hearts, imaginations, minds and hands to work, we can empower ourselves and our children and build our cities into places that we are proud to call our own. **TW**

THE WITNESS



This lawn mower repair shop, owned by Ben and Ethel Feagan, was one of the 144 Poletown businesses destroyed in 1981.

credit: David C. Turnley

takes into consideration both the natural resources of our area and the existing skills of Detroiters. For example, Michigan has abundant sand. This can be used to produce glass for storm windows which will help us save energy, solar panels to harness the heat of the sun, greenhouses to grow vegetables all year round.

We need to be creating all kinds of locally-owned and operated stores in our communities so that our young people can see stores not just as places where you spend money to buy what you want, but where local people are working to meet the needs of the community. In every neighborhood there should be bakeries where families can

Our goal should be to make Detroit the first city in the nation to use our schools to serve the community rather than as places where young people are upgraded to leave the community.

In Its own drowsy, slowed concept of time the Sun Spirit coursed Its way across the extremes again, left to right, east to west. Outside in the silent approach of dusk, the dew-damp crystal specks in the concrete of the sidewalk and the street began to reflect rippling, broken beams of street light to rival the dance rhythms of wind-chased shadows across the abandoned field. The deserted lot once filled with parked automobiles, and the adjoining desolate steel factory, had become historical illusions -- passing echoes of the voices of working people from a time when the factory had provided a living for hundreds of families. The weeded-over parking lot was being reclaimed by the weary, calculated movements of nature and by the power of the passing footsteps of Chief Pontiac and his warriors who once camped near the creek that was near the factory. Santos remembered that there was a stone monument close to the old iron crossing bridge that marked the precise location where Chief Pontiac had held his War Council prior to the attack on old Fort Detroit. The monument had been buried years before by the careless dumping of gravel and stone.

When Santos first returned to the small working-class town where he had grown up he left the streets of Detroit with great expectations. It was an opportunity for him to start his life over and to get away from the urbanized chaos of crime and drugs. The factories in Detroit were being closed, one by one. Many of his friends lost their jobs and soon after gave up looking for work that would pay enough to provide for their families.

Santos moved what little furniture,

Jose L. Garza is a Native American-Chicano who moved from Detroit to Ecorse in an effort to deepen his Native spirituality. He now lives in rural Pennsylvania. This article is excerpted from a longer essay.

books and plants he owned into a small house with a large back yard. He had always wanted a large green open space and with the first signs of warm weather he planted a garden to grow the vegetables he would use for survival. The garden was dug, with apologies to Mother Earth, in a great circle. An altar to prompt the blessings of the earth was erected at the center of the back yard



using found objects: feather gifts from the winged creatures, soil gathered from distant places, special stones borrowed from places of power and solitude, hard seeds like that of the horse chestnut tree that had survived the cold and damp of winter. The altar formed a circle around a young tree and with the passing days of summer heat it became a medicine wheel. Slowly Santos began to regain his balance and power.

As summer neared its end the people living in the neighborhood could no longer accept the strange ways of their new neighbor. They could not tolerate that he seldom cut the grass. He owned no television or automobile and little else of material wealth, and yet appeared to be content. Fear begot anger, and anger

begot vigilante "justice."

Santos watched the wild birds and four-legged creatures take their share of the sunflower seed harvest. He conversed with the plants and reminded them at harvest time that he too would become the food for future generations of plants. In return the sunflowers extended themselves thirteen feet into the sky and the Indian corn grew to a height of nine feet.

It was the summer of liberation, but now the time was drawing near. The court had instructed the landlord that Santos had 30 days to vacate the house.

Santos walked matter-of-factly to the open window.

"Ayyyyyiiiieeee...!" he shouted with a force that originated from the unity of fire and water.

The war whoop scattered the silent atoms of the ascending night air. Snow geese in their full autumn flight were proud and envious of the force that it contained. Within the call survived the knowledge of the tradition of the ancient ones.

"Ayyyyyiiiieeee...!"

The reserved people of the crowded suburb did not understand the intrusion of the strange sound. It sent electrifying chills down their spines and recalled for some the days of the covered wagons forming a circle for protection. The sound sliced the thin air so neatly that there was no evidence of its passing. It drew its strength from the molten core of the planet as well as from the jet stream of a high-flying hunter eagle.

The war whoop could not be bought or sold. It could not be mass produced, injected or rejected, copied or taxed. In its simplest essence it was untamed and yet a willing servant to the slightest well-placed cross breeze. With each use it was the Good Medicine that replenished Itself.

It was Indian pride in its raw form, and it had survived.

TW

Using Talents

by Grace Lee Boggs

The Living City by Roberta Brandes Gratz, Simon & Schuster, paper \$10.95.

The Living Economy: A New Economics in the Making, edited by Paul Ekins, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

From her experience as an urban activist and a *New York Post* reporter for 15 years, Roberta Gratz is convinced that the genuine rebirth of cities is coming *not* from developers and urban planners but from neighborhood people who are fighting to preserve and improve what already exists. The key, she says, is a "percolating-up" process rather than a "trickle-down" strategy. Wholesale new developments like "Urban Renewal" and GM's Poletown destroy the streets, pedestrians and human relationships that have devel-

vacant and abandoned apartment houses on Kelly Street were scheduled for demolition by the city. Four years later residents had restored them at a total cost of \$540,000 (including job training for 40 workers and apartment rehabilitation at \$26,000 per unit). Banana Kelly has since become the catalyst for neighborhood revitalization both locally and nationally. Its slogan is "Urban pioneers! Don't move, improve!"



Habitat for Humanity workers, like many others, work to renovate Detroit homes.

credit: Jim West

Today in "Rust Belt" cities the rehabilitation of abandoned houses by grassroots individuals and organizations is beginning to assume the dimensions of a movement. Most of these "urban pioneers" are motivated not by the "bottom line" but by a whole range of human needs, including the need for affordable housing, self-reliance and the pride that comes from home ownership and rebuilding a community. A "New Economics" is in the making.

This New Economics is explored in *The Living Economy*, a collection of papers written for TOES (The Other Economic Summit), organized as an alternative to the annual Economic Summits of the Western industrialized powers and Japan.

Basic to the "New Economics" is a reconceptualization of human needs, our relationship to the environment, and the nature of work.

1) Conventional Economics views human needs chiefly in material terms. "New Economics" sees human needs as both material and non-material, i.e. for expression, creativity, equality, community and participation.

2) Conventional Economics assumes that growth is good and more is better. It is as if economists had never heard of cancer. "New Economics" is rooted in the recognition that "human life and economic activity are an interdependent part of the wide ecological processes that sustain life on earth."

3) Conventional Economics views work in narrowly economic terms, i.e. as labor. For the capitalist labor is a cost of production, like land and capital. Therefore it is paid as little as possible and marginalized or eliminated in order to increase profits. At the other pole workers and their supporters see labor as the source of all wealth and value, and therefore entitled to a greater share of and control over surplus value. For nearly 200 years these concepts of work and labor have together provided the theoretical framework for the class struggle.

In recent years, as automation and the export of jobs overseas have eroded the role and power of labor in the industrialized countries, the concept of work as labor has become increasingly less helpful as a theoretical tool for progressive struggle. Hence the search for a more human-centered concept of work. In the words of E. F. Schumacher, the purpose of work is: "First, to provide necessary goods and services. Second, to enable every one of us to use and thereby perfect our gifts like good stewards. Third, to do so in service to and in cooperation with others, so as to liberate ourselves from our inborn egocentricity."

TW

THE WITNESS

book review

oped organically over the years. Grassroots struggles, on the other hand, not only renew physical structures. They build people and community.

One of the most inspiring examples of urban rebirth by this process is Banana Kelly, a crescent-shaped block in the South Bronx. In 1977 the three

Grace Boggs is a long-time community activist who has lived (with her husband, James Boggs) in the same Detroit house for nearly 30 years. Boggs is a coordinator of WE PROS; editor of the SOSAD newsletter; and active in a People's Festival celebrating grassroots efforts to turn Detroit around.

Living beyond fear

by Mary West

Dorothy Garner says that there is a lot of her father in her, who was a “rebel” and a “sensitive, wise man.” He encouraged her to read everything, including the United Mineworkers’ Journal, and told her to be careful which road she chose to walk down. *But it was not for her father’s memory that she decided to confront the drug traffic on her block.*

As a working mother, she took a number of civil service tests before being hired as a corrections officer. Her first job was at the Detroit House of Corrections (Dehoco). For the past five years, she has helped run a half-way house for prisoners in southwest Detroit. She says that her job has taught her how to control her temper and how to make decisions quickly. When she is on the street, she is often recognized by former inmates. “They yell, ‘Hey, Mama G!’ if they’re doing okay and scatter if they’re up to something.” *But it was not because of her job that she began to march against crack houses.*

She raised two daughters and one son alone, and has a grandson, age nine, who when there’s a problem at school prefers that his grandmother, rather than his mother, accompany him. “He says, ‘Grandma knows how to negotiate.’” *But it is not for her grandson that she gives talks, speeches and interviews about her anti-drug crusade.*

It began on a Sunday evening in 1988. After many calls to the police, there was a drug bust at a crack house on the street in northwest Detroit where Garner lives. One of her neighbors, Mary Ryan, stepped outside her front door and called out “Thank you, Jesus!”

The next morning, an emergency medical service team arrived at Mary

Ryan’s house, saying that someone had dialed 911 and reported that she had been shot. Later that day, the “dead wagon” (the van from the Wayne County Coroner’s Office) pulled up, reportedly to pick up Ryan’s body. Still later, a fire truck arrived. Garner remembers saying, “There’s no fire now, but there’s sure going to be one soon.”



Dorothy Garner

credit: Jim West

Garner began walking the streets around her neighborhood. “I guess I was preaching and teaching. I decided I wasn’t going to live in fear.” The walks were accompanied by singing, praying and chanting. With the advice and encouragement of two local Baptist pastors, Garner organized a small group that met every Saturday night to plan the marches. The participants were mostly older people who, like Garner, had lived in the neighborhood 20 years or more.

The weekly marches are now sponsored by the organization Garner founded called WE PROS, *We the People Reclaiming Our Streets*. At a typical march, people gather, don bright orange vests, pray in a circle then set out, escorted by a Detroit Police squad car. Someone

carries a bullhorn to help lead the songs and chants. Another beats a drum. Another distributes flyers. It is a kind of visible, audible presence that has people staring, applauding or looking away; the kind that whips guard dogs into a frenzy.

Garner tells of death threats against her, delivered by a gang member who identified himself as “Peace.” Her response is this: “If I die, let the Clark Gas Station’s tow truck put my casket on two wheels and take it up and down the street. They can only take my life. My spirit stays here and from my spirit others will rise.”

After three years of marching in the street and working with police, drug dealers continue, reaching deeper into the community, recruiting children. “A drug pusher once told me, ‘I boss this block,’” Garner said.

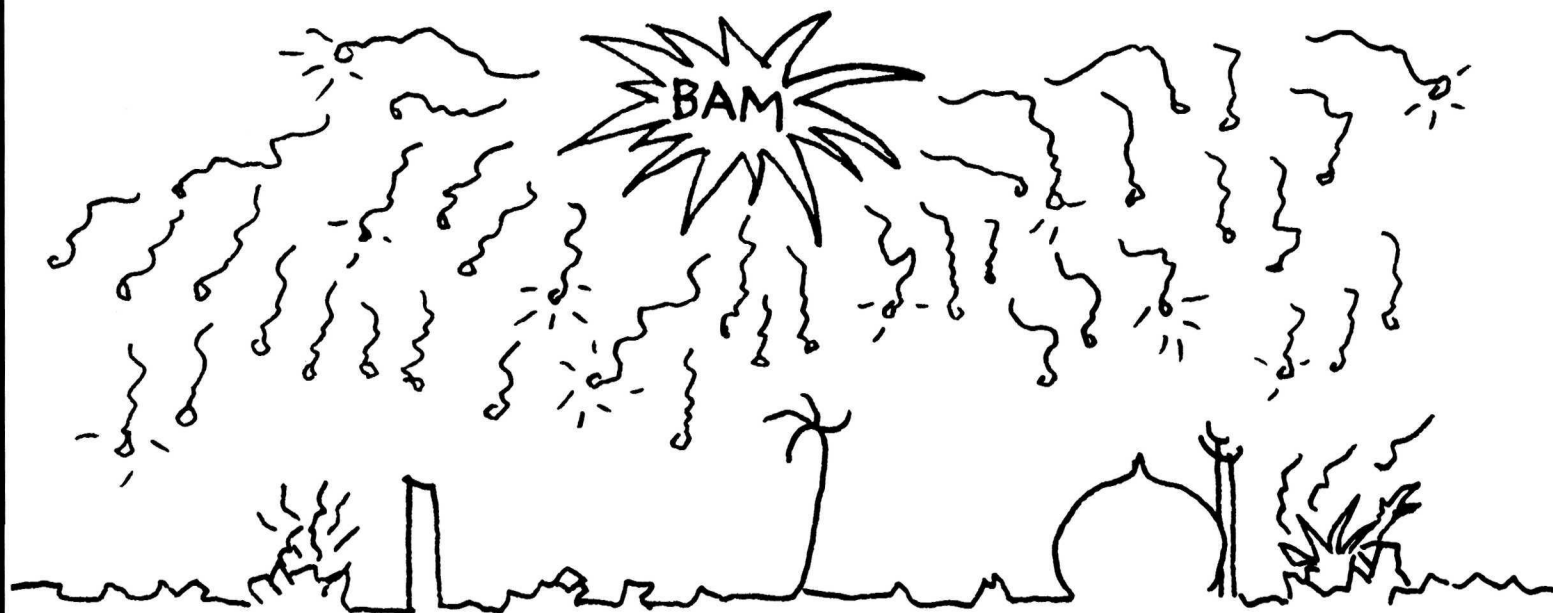
To continue her campaign against drugs, Garner relies on her faith, nurtured since childhood. Every morning she prays for God to take care of her. Psalm 91 is her favorite; her Bible at home is always open to it. She also takes a little time to enjoy herself. “When I get despondent, I go to the nursery,” to look at plants and flowers. The sight of growing things “gives me inspiration.”

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

Most of her spare time is spent organizing and helping WE PROS grow. She is particularly proud of starting a male mentoring program. A female mentoring program begins this fall.

“I never think of turning around or backing up,” Garner says. “I’ve never backed off a fight. I’ve lost many, but I’ve won some too.”

TW



GEORGE BUSH'S THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT

credit: Charlotte J. Andrews

The November issue
of The Witness will consider DEFENSE

self-defense

neighborhood defense

civilian-based defense

and then, of course, there's the Department of Defense



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