The Witness

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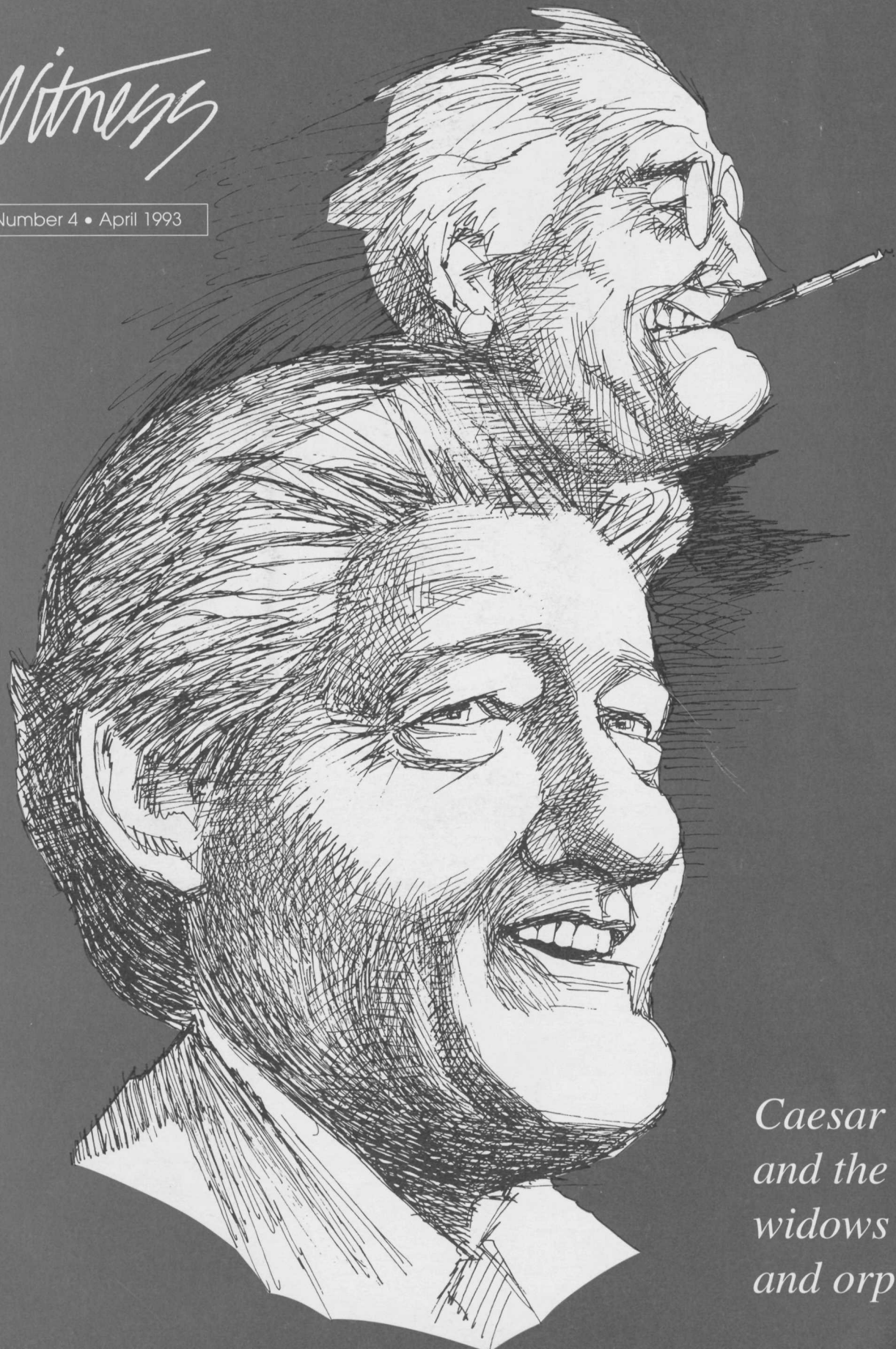


Caesar and the widows and orphans

Aging

I'M WRITING BECAUSE I am intrigued by your issue on Aging. [1-2/93] (And I write as one who is a great supporter of your work and of *The Witness*.)

As I read your opening column and various essays, however, I sensed what appears to me to be a blind spot.

Again and again, the powerful verb "aging" seemed to be a kind of code word for "people who are old." The unintentional implication in many phrases and comments sprinkled through the issue seemed to be that "aging" somehow is something that only affects "seniors."

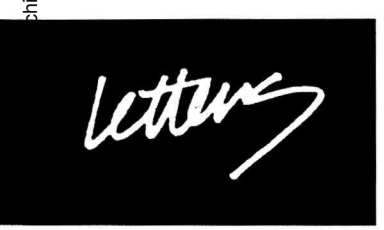
For instance, in your essay you mentioned "when I'm old" — as if you somehow were not already becoming old. You posed the question: "Is it sometimes a mistake to counsel older people to detach?" And I thought: Even the basic context of that question is presumptuous. It suggests that we, as younger people, are somehow removed from the issue of aging — perhaps even sitting on the sidelines as counselors.

I think Bernard Nash came the closest, in your issue, to the point I'm trying to make here, when he wrote:

"The stereotypes we laugh at when younger become the benchmarks of our own self-image as we age."

But then Nash quickly moved back into his own role as a "senior" writing about "seniors."

Now, I certainly recognize that there are many issues that involve people who are older than 65 in unique ways. And we must not ignore these important issues. I applaud the attention you have given to some of them.



However, I suspect that one reason we have a problem with keeping "older" people fully integrated in our society is that those of us who are "younger" deny that we are aging ourselves. The many ways in which we ignore and segregate "older" people, I've come to believe, reflect more about our own failings than about our parents and grandparents themselves.

The concept of ageism is far more complex than a discreet set of attitudes younger people have toward the elderly. Ageism is the flowering of our own fear and denial about ourselves as we pass through our 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s and watch our bodies, minds and hearts inevitably change.

I have found great comfort and insight in recent years in comparing experiences with my father, as he passes through his 60s.

He has taught me important lessons about: the lifelong reward of continuing intellectual inquiry, the growth that is possible in a long and committed marriage, and the enduring power of compassionate love to connect lives in families and communities. Perhaps most importantly, I am learning from him that, although aging does represent a long, slow narrowing of choices for most of us, it also can represent a profound deepening in our life's focus.

Ageism — a refusal to come to terms with this wonderful dynamic of human life — is so prevalent in our society that we must explore these and many other issues. If we truly believe in a God who is unfolding Creation all around us, it seems to me that people of all ages need to begin thinking about the aging process more as a series of small miracles to be explored than as a problem to be solved.

I hope these ramblings may be of some interest to you — and I wish you the continued blessings of God's creative insights as you keep up your very fine work.

David M. Crumm
Detroit, MI

I'M A JEWISH EPISCOPALIAN who would very much like to see Mordechai Vanunu set free. At the same time, your article makes it sound as though Israel is pursuing a nuclear weapons policy for the sake of advancing an aggressive agenda. Without disparaging the rights and hopes of the Palestinian people, I believe that this characterization is unfair.

The people and government of Israel understand that the use of nuclear weapons on their part would be suicidal. The retaliation thus engendered would be massive and final. Whether Israeli thinking is rational or paranoid, the purpose of its nuclear program is to make the cost of a future Holocaust prohibitive for those who would take affirmative steps to bring it about.

I agree that the best way to insure against a future Holocaust is to be cognizant and caring about the rights of others. I am not an Israeli and it is not my place to offer Israelis my advice. I do wish that your article had been a bit clearer as to the reasons why Israel may have felt the need to develop these deadly and destructive weapons.

Ed Smith
Evanston, IL

WHOEVER SENT ME the December issue of *The Witness* — thank you!

I was immediately struck by the articles: *Witnessing Israel/Palestine* by Rhea Miller and in January/February 1993 by the article: *Smooth sailing, captain!* by Robert DeWitt. I am almost 69 and the articles in *The Witness* give me task for thought. (A touch of aphasia).

Charles Riemitis
Manchester, CT

RECENTLY A FRIEND OF MINE gave me a copy of *The Witness* magazine and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. The views expressed by the magazine are close to my own and I found it encouraging that a church magazine would be so prophetic and forthright about issues of justice and faith.

Marchiene Rienstra
Douglas, MI

I WANT TO WRITE A BIG LONG LETTER filled with my deepest gratitude for your thoughtful, incisive, artistic creation. However, my work with birthing *campesinos* who fill the *Casa Materna* has cut into my letter-writing time. Please know how much your work is valued. I pass my copies to friends here.

Kitty Madden
Matagalpa, Nicaragua

I Accuse

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1898, Emile Zola wrote an open letter to the president of the French Republic. The letter, entitled "J'accuse," held up a mirror to French anti-Semitism. It made a cause celebre of the Dreyfus Affair and awakened the conscience of France.

Now, in 1993, it is time for another such letter. The cause this time is not anti-Semitism, but its equal in evil — sexism. I do not claim to be Zola's equal as a writer, but surely my outrage and pain are equal to that which motivated his letter.

And so I accuse.

I accuse the Episcopal Church in the United States of hypocrisy, cowardice and mendacity. I accuse its leadership of hiding behind legalisms, of prizing collegiality above justice, of buying peace by systematically relegating women to second-class status, of salving male consciences by betraying women. Most of all, I accuse the Church of a willful blindness to the pain caused by these actions.

Shakespeare said of conscience that it "is but a word that cowards use, devised at first to keep the strong in awe." Just so has the infamous "conscience clause" perverted conscience, making it into a tool to silence people, to keep the strong in awe in the Episcopal Church.

You have not experienced silence until you have lived in a diocese such as Fort Worth. Here, one learns that silence creates silence. Worse, one learns that silence has a suffocating, deadening effect. And the thing that dies first is hope. For hidden behind the oily gentility that prevails here in Fort Worth is an evil silence — the silence by the [Episcopal] Synod [of America] as to its true motives, and the silence of acquiescence by male clergy. And it is an evil silence that prevails in the national Church.

It is time to end the silence. Other consciences demand action, justice, respect, and yes, love. My conscience tells me that what is happening here is evil, that the inhuman, unequal, and unfair practices sanctioned by the Church through its so-called "conscience clause" [adopted by the Episcopal Church's bishops in 1977] simply cannot be the will of a loving God. When I was received into the Episcopal Church, I naively believed that a woman ordained by the Church is as much a priest as any man ordained by the Church. But as it stands now, because of the current interpretation of the conscience clause, ordained women are priests everywhere but in Fort Worth and those other dioceses that are refuges of the Episcopal Synod of America, the "traditionalist" splinter group of which Bishop Clarence Pope of Fort Worth is the head.

The issue, I keep reading, is not the ordination of women. Rather, the Synod and the presiding bishop keep saying, the issue is inclusion. But this issue of inclusion is merely a pretty mask put over a vicious ugliness. For at what price is the Church buying inclusion? In Fort Worth the price is the exclusion of those who disagree with the tender conscience of Bishop Pope, and now, it seems, soon-to-be Bishop Jack Iker.

Presiding Bishop Browning's passion for inclusion has created in Fort Worth an Episcopalian South Africa, a fiefdom for traditionalists where a terrible apartheid is practiced — not along lines of color, but along lines of belief. And make no mistake. The litmus test for acceptance is rejection of the ordination of women. Those who agree with the "traditionalist" views of Bishop Pope are listened to, cared for. Those who disagree have been labeled unchristian or worse, and silenced.

From New York, and from other dioceses, it probably looks like such a tidy solution. Give the Synod a few dioceses. It gets them out of your hair, and its lets you pat yourselves on the back for being so inclusive, so broad-minded. Unfortunately, real life rarely is so tidy. Not everyone in Fort Worth agrees with the Synod. Other people live and work and try to worship in Fort Worth, others who agree with the stands of the national Church. But clearly, we are to be sacrificed on the altar of inclusion. From where I stand, folks, this looks not so much like inclusion as its does a sell-out. It's a sell-out of women, of all who see beyond gender to a larger humanity.

What consideration have you given to the pain you are causing? How can I and other women here find any sense of ourselves as children of God in the Church when the Church so betrays and violates us? What thought have you given to the pain of women longing to see a female image, hear a female voice say those words: "This is my body. Do this in memory of me"?

Most of all, what thought have you spared for the pain of the ordained women here who see their priesthood denied? How can you sanction such a violation? These women are not simply denied the right to celebrate. The validity of the sacrament of their ordination is denied. They are rendered non-existent as priests.

Proponents of newly-elected Bishop Coadjutor Jack Iker say that his selection followed all legal requirements and that his stated intention to continue the repression that now exists in Fort Worth does not disqualify him because it is sanctioned by the conscience clause, so therefore he must be confirmed. It was this legalistic argument that was used to persuade some standing committees to change their votes from "no" to "yes," and that is being used to persuade other bishops to confirm Iker. But it is exactly that repressive atmosphere in Fort Worth that has allowed the Synod to control and restrict diocesan discussion to such an extent that Iker's election was a mockery of established process.

An election that stands on an immoral basis is an immoral election. That is why what you do in confirming Iker may be legal, but it is not right. In elevating the conscience of the likes of Bishop Pope and Jack Iker to such revered status, you betray and violate the conscience of countless others.

As long as the current interpretation of the conscience clause is allowed to prevail, the Church is a full partner in sexist repression. The least you should do is acknowledge your complicity in that repression.

The best you could do is change it.

Katie Sherrod, Fort Worth, TX

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Hope and holocausts

In ancient Rome, Ambrose noted that farmers were among the working poor begging outside government granaries for grain they had helped produce.

In so far as Caesar had welfare, it was a grain dole distributed largely within view of Rome's influential citizens.

Elsewhere, Caesar relied on other methods: the creation of infrastructure – roads, aqueducts, modern marvels – and games which Plutarch said were designed "to minister to pleasure and win favour."

After the show which included the demise of those "judged for their punishment to be food for wild beasts," the circus would move on, sometimes leaving behind lions and bears who had become diseased. These, Apuleius noted, were butchered by the local people who had no meat.

Caesar's methods were bizarre, but effective.

As they are today.

George Bush only improved on Caesar's sleight of hand, scaling back aid programs while giving the impression that people's needs were being met through volunteerism.

Bush said it was inefficient for Caesar to help. He raised up examples of people acting compassionately and sold us 1,000 points of light as the antidote to the pain his administration caused.

For spectacles Bush gave us Panama and Iraq – bombs bursting in air, threat and entertainment.

In contrast, Bill Clinton's conviction that Americans want to make sacrifices so that everyone will have access to health care is shocking. I had nearly come to believe that government had nothing to do with the common good.

Lamentation credit: Marek Czarnecki

The issues are complicated for me.

My first political memories are of the assassinations of Martin Luther King, the Kennedys, the Black Panthers, members of the American Indian Movement.... I concluded then that the government was not indifferent, but dangerously hostile to people who pursue change.

As an adult, I entered a marriage in which tax resistance was a tenet. Each year Bill and I send in our return with a letter outlining the most recent atrocities – at home and overseas – with which we do not want to be associated.

This year, however, I find myself wishing that I *could* pay my taxes. Clinton's promises sometimes slide through my cynicism.

Could we – within the governmental structure – restore the environment, redistribute financial and educational opportunities, improve our relationship with the United Nations and show respect for the sovereignty of other countries?

I am surprised how startling these hopes feel and I realize how tightly my political imagination has been corralled by 12 years of Republican leadership. The brutal force of the unleashed powers have made their impression on my ability to dream dreams.

But my resistance to trusting a president go deeper: the tenacity of the powers is not to be underestimated.

I remember the heartfelt platform Jimmy Carter offered and the speed with which – in the vortex of power – he was disabled from that which he would have done and forced to do that which he would not (like authorizing the neutron bomb and cruise missiles).

I remember Lyndon Johson's great society at home and annihilation abroad.

There is reason for cynicism. There is even a healthy realism in acknowledging the powers for what they are. But I do not want to be a fatalist. It cannot be that God never works through Caesar.

So I will place (cautious) hope in Clinton's administration. But my faith lies in the unseen, unheard Word of God moving through history, more often than not in the dreams and actions of those on the margins. TW

editor's note

JeanieWylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. **Marek Czarnecki** is a collage artist in Brooklyn, N.Y. References are taken from *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* by Klaus Wengst, Fortress, 1987.

Calcutta, the cost of poverty

by David L. James

For a man who has just sold a pint of his blood for $2, the offer of $2,000 for a kidney is an offer worth listening to.

So salesmen, who are the middlemen in the rapidly growing market for spare body parts, wait outside blood-donor labs in Calcutta, India, to offer unheard-of riches to men and women who may have to pull rickshaws, sweep streets or beg.

When Sardar Bose sold his kidney to pay for his daughter's wedding, the amount of money seemed so large and came so fast that he thought he'd discovered a "rupee river," and he enjoyed a few months of living a dream.

Bose returned eight months later to sell his other kidney but was told he could not. He then opened his shirt, extended his arms and said, "Then take something else — I'm ready to sell."

Indian law forbids organ transplants from unrelated donors, but those who consider that saving a life at the expense of an unneeded organ is justified continue to defy the law. The typical buyer is a Middle Eastern or European businessman who usually offers $10,000, $3,000 of which goes to the doctor.

"It is a dirty business," Mother Teresa told our group of Episcopalian volunteers who had come to India to work in the City of Joy and other parts of Calcutta. "The rich are eating the poor." At Prem Dan, a Calcutta shelter, Mother Teresa showed us two men with the tell-tale scars across their lower backs and sides as they sat on a bench in the sun waiting for a lunch of curried goat and rice. Two months earlier they felt rich but now medical problems have developed due to inadequate care during recovery.

"Go to Kalighat," Mother Teresa said after taking our group on her morning rounds. "You will see what this evil business is doing."

Mother Teresa credit: David L. James

Kalighat is the Missionaries of Charity's home for the dying in Calcutta. Over 55,000 people have been picked up off the streets and given care. There our group fed, washed and nursed the dying.

That's where I was introduced to Bose, who lay on cot #34. His remaining kidney was failing. I helped him shave and cut his fingernails as we had broken conversations in English and Bengali. Other volunteers from Holland and France who had been with Bose since his arrival filled in the cracks of his story.

Bose was a rickshaw driver in the only city in the world with hand-pulled rickshaws. For 6 or 8 rupees — 30 to 40 cents — he pulled people and their packages through the fumes of Calcutta's traffic.

Bose was told that in return for his kidney, he would receive long-term medical care and that the wealthy Middle Eastern buyer would be so thankful his life had been saved that he would offer the seller a good job.

The medical care Bose received was four days in the clinic after the operation and two visits for medicine after his discharge. The job never existed and the buyer soon returned to Bahrain.

Soon after Bose arrived at Kalighat, Sister Pauline found his daughter to tell her her father was dying. The nuns thought she would like to know, but she did not come to see him.

As Bose began to talk of his daughter he became so excited he raised his head from the rag-filled pillow and tried to sit up. Bose knows he is dying and that he cannot buy a kidney to save his life. But his voice expressed no regret or recrimination.

As the sisters laid him back, he described how beautiful his daughter was, how wonderful the food, flowers and music, and how all the neighbors said there had never been such a wedding in their area. TW

David L. James is rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Somers, N.Y.

Reader alert!

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Sunset's Children

by Edward A. Dougherty

Blood's in the sky.
See how the leaves cling to the trees.
This is the dangerous time.
Someone said
twenty thousand children die
a day. The sky above goes dark
leaving bands of color
along the western edge. Headlights
burn the eyes. Distant trees, silhouetted,
weep solid, black tears.

Edward Dougherty lives in Bowling Green, O.

the sign

by Lou Ella Hickman, I.W.B.S.

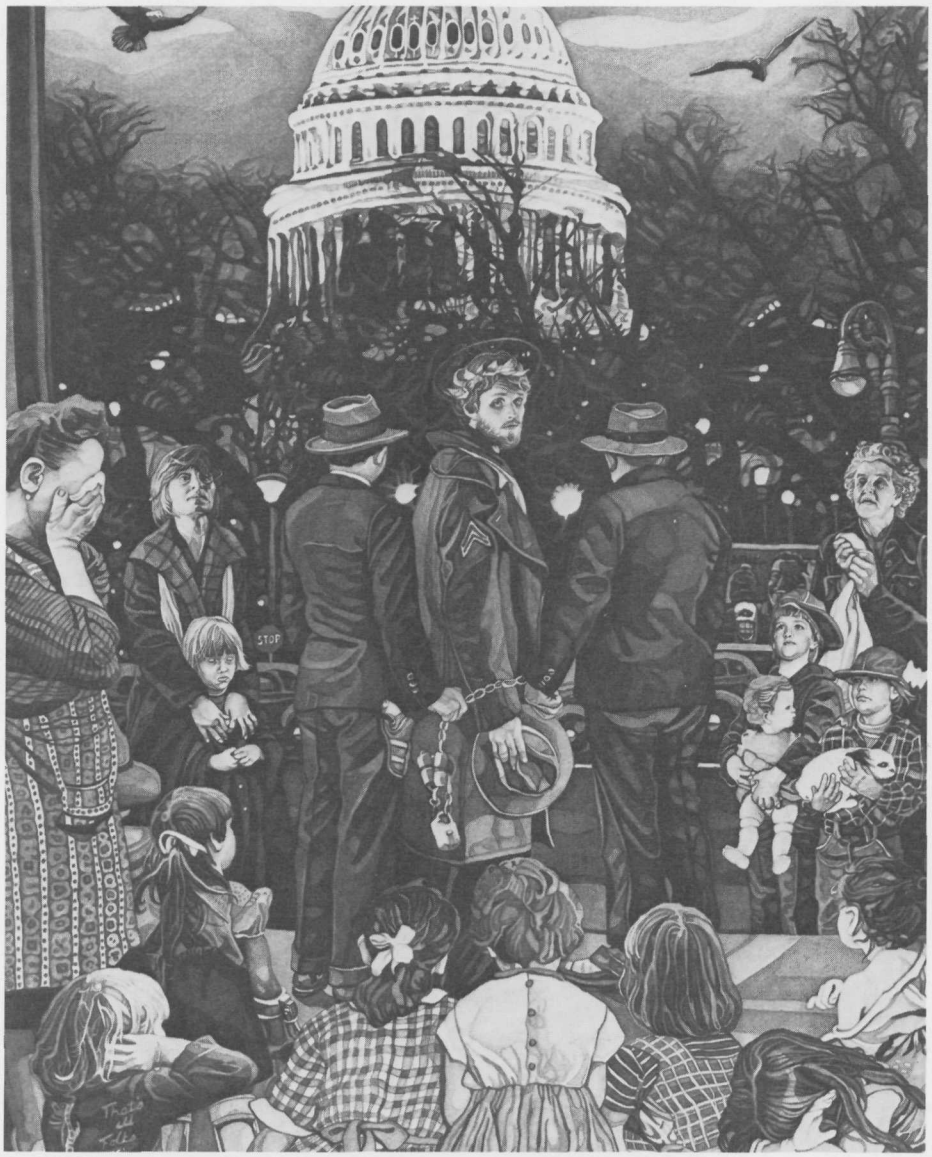
just three blocks away
she stands
will work for food
the sign — cardboard and pencil —
signals more than neon

just three blocks
from my convent
and some days her son
perhaps wrapped in his own silence
stands clasped to her knees

almost annunciation
they both lean into a tiredness
that workers in a vineyard
of some late afternoon hired
o yes with equal pay for unequal work
had known once upon a time

today
her sign
still reads
will work for food

Lou Ella Hickman lives in Corpus Christi, Tex.



Luke 23 credit: Dierdre Luzwick

Caesar and the orphans

by Amata Miller

Deep divisions exist among people of faith over whether God's admonition to care for "widows, orphans and strangers in the land" is a call to individual charity or to political action for social justice.

Debate in the political arena reflects the same division. Ronald Reagan, George Bush and their followers advocated private charity and "1,000 points of light" as the way to deal with poverty and related social problems. In contrast, Bill Clinton echoes John Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt in arguing that in a democracy citizens must exercise co-responsibility through public initiatives to assist and empower those who are left behind by the functioning of the nation's economy.

Of course, the degree to which one judges the political process as responsive or gridlocked, peopled by serious public servants or corrupt politicians, will shape where one stands in the debate.

Evidence of effective public sector initiatives convinces me that when the nation has had the will to do so we have made a difference for the poor and vulnerable in our society, and when we have not willed to do so their plight has inexorably worsened. In addition, my work in Washington, D.C. with dedicated elected officials who are people of conscience struggling to enact and implement just public policy nourishes my belief in the potential of the democratic process to produce a more just and humane society.

State of the union

Readers of *The Witness* do not need to be convinced that our nation is guilty of systemic neglect of "widows and orphans and strangers in the land." They are painfully familiar with outrageous facts which demonstrate the failures of our economy and current public policy to enable millions of women and children to live at levels of minimum subsistence.

• One of every four U.S. children under the age of six (5.5 million of them) lives in absolute poverty; the Children's Defense Fund estimates that a child dies in the U.S. every 53 minutes because of poverty.

Amata Miller, IHM, is economist and education coordinator for NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby in Washington, D.C. Artist **Dierdre Luzwick** prepared this image as part of a series called *Christ Kin.* Her book *Endangered Species* has been published by Harper and Row, N.Y., 1992. She lives in Cambridge, Wis.

• The fastest growing segment of the homeless population is families with children—100,000 U.S. children are homeless on any given night.

• One-third of poor mothers with dependent children are not covered by Medicaid, a program which was set up to give all of the non-elderly poor access to health care, but which covers barely 51 percent of them.

• Women are 58 percent of the population over 65, but 71 percent of the elderly poor.

• Two-thirds of all low-wage workers are women, and 10 million women in the workforce do not earn enough to support themselves and their children at an adequate level.

Back to the New Deal

These facts speak to me of a nation which has recently turned away from its most vulnerable.

But at other times we have as a people set in place programs which have addressed the structural causes of poverty for women and children (as well as men). This is not to say that we have ever gone far enough, but we have been able to make a meaningful difference for specific groups.

For example, we have, through social insurance and other federal programs, dramatically reduced the level of poverty and vulnerability among the elderly. Through the Social Security system enacted in 1935, enhanced through the enactment of national health insurance for the elderly (Medicare) in 1965, and indexed for inflation since the early 1970s, the proportion of the elderly who are poor has been cut from over 20 percent in the 1960s to 12 percent in the early 1990s.

In addition, public concern for the housing needs of the elderly led to large-scale public funding of construction of low-income senior citizen housing by not-for-profit sponsors and rental subsidies for the elderly poor.

The food stamp program, originally enacted in 1939, and revived as a source of in-kind aid to the poor in 1961, has successfully targeted benefits to the neediest and is one of the few programs that assists the working poor. The Department of Agriculture reports that 82 percent of the benefits go to families with children, two-thirds of the recipient households are headed by women and half of the recipients are children.

When the nation has had the will to do so we have made a difference for the poor and vulnerable in our society.

In the 1960s, because a young president read Michael Harrington's book, *The Other America,* the nation became newly aware of the poor in its midst. The "War on Poverty" was only partially funded (in part because of the Vietnam War), but longitudinal studies of the effects of some of the programs show that they made a demonstrable difference.

For example, a 1985 review and analysis of Head Start as a comprehensive early intervention program for disadvantaged children and their families found multiple positive effects. Head Start improved the children's self-esteem, their motivation to achieve and their social interaction skills as well as reducing failure and drop-out rates; it had a positive impact on child health and development; it encouraged participation of parents, and raised community awareness of and response to the needs of low-income parents. The tragedy is that it reaches barely a third of the children in poverty.

Happily, President Clinton has heeded the recommendations of child advocates and included funding to extend coverage in his economic program.

He has also pledged to increase funding for WIC (Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children), which has significantly improved the health of poor women and children. This program effectively provides the extra food low-income families need and links pregnant women to prenatal care. Each $1 spent through this program saves $3 in the first year of a life by reducing low-birthweight births and prematurity. But currently WIC only reaches 4.5 million women and children, slightly over half of those who need its benefits.

In the 1970s the idea of a "negative income tax" as a way of supplementing the income of the poor had support from liberals who wanted to get rid of the demeaning means-testing of the AFDC system, and of conservatives who wanted to eliminate the welfare bureaucracy. Near the end of the Nixon Administration it was close to enactment, and in 1976 a version of it called the Earned Income Tax Credit was passed. In 1991 more than 12 million working families with adjusted gross incomes of less than $21,250 and at least one child living at home qualified for the credit of up to $1,192 depending on earnings. The credit is accessed simply by filing an EIC form along with federal income tax forms. This program is applauded across party lines as a successful anti-poverty policy. It makes the tax system more progressive, rewards rather than penalizes work and does not stigmatize recipients since benefits are received through the tax system rather than through a welfare agency.

Numerous examples of public programs through which we have institutionalized access to socially desirable goods and services can be cited.

In the 1950s we wanted to encourage home ownership among newly forming families, so we put in place tax deduc-

tions for mortgage interest and Federal Home Administration (FHA) mortgage guarantees. In the same decade, we wanted to widen access to health insurance, so we instituted the tax deduction for employers and exemption for employees. It was our way of encouraging employers to offer, and workers to accept, health insurance as a benefit in lieu of wage increases. The middle class has come to see these tax preferences as their right, while they resist other public programs to ensure access to housing and health care for low-income Americans.

When there is political will to address a social need we have done so as a people. In some periods we have been more sensitive to the needs of the poor and vulnerable of the society than in others. And during those times — the 1930s and the 1960s — we have put in place public policies, social structures which have effectively reduced the incidence of poverty and its effects.

Cycles of caring and neglect

Is there anything we can learn from our past about the periods in which we have made progress toward more just social structures?

Political historian Arthur Schlesinger says that there are two themes that run through our national history, alternating in their relative influence. One theme, that which dominated in the 1980s, is that of the ethic of self-interested pursuit of prosperity in a competitive *laissez faire* environment. The other theme is the spirit of commonwealth, of the public good, of the general welfare which calls for "affirmative government."

Schlesinger argues that the issues before us now call for coordination — not competition — rooted in a working partnership among government, business and labor and aimed at economic growth. He sees a shift to affirmative government propelled both by the demands of the time and by the ethos of the generation coming to power in the 1990s, formed as they were by the progressive ideals of the 1960s. The leaders of the 1960s, he observes, came of political age in the 1930s. Like the 1960s and the 1930s the 1990s can be a time for reshaping the public policy of the nation toward the most vulnerable of the people.

The 1990s?

With many others I am heartened by the election of a president who grew up in some adversity, who values listening to people of various perspectives before making his own judgement, who has chosen a multiculturally, racially and gender-diverse circle of close advisers, and who seeks to build consensus around decisions.

His professed concern for the quality of community and for the common good are a welcome emphasis.

However, the enormity and complexity of the economic and political challenges before him, as well as his centrist position on the political spectrum raise concern over whether or not he will give enough priority to the needs of the most vulnerable in the society. The inherited budget deficit, the size of the national debt, the anemic economy, the toll of neglect of infrastructure investment and the mood of a wary public put heavy constraints on what he can do.

The leaders of the 1960s came of political age in the 1930s. Like the 1960s and the 1930s, the 1990s can be a time for reshaping the public policy of the nation toward the most vulnerable of the people.

There are many legitimate claims on the public purse; the middle class as well as the poor have paid the bills for the enrichment of the few during the past 12 years; the reduction of the deficit and the interest burden of the debt is a necessity; investment in education and physical infrastructure is essential for the future. And the worsening needs of many here and abroad cry out for creative and generous response.

Where the priority will go depends on who participates in the debate through the political process, and how effectively. The role of people of faith will be key. If they see the world exclusively through eyes blinded by that middle class ideology which privatizes religion and individualizes faith they will not see the creation of social structures to ensure the basic human dignity of the most vulnerable as part of faith responsibility. Then it is likely that the needs of the widows and orphans and strangers in the land will be forgotten in the struggle over national priorities.

But if people of faith take inspiration from the biblical injunctions to create structures of justice and from the periods of our national history in which we set ourselves to the purpose of making our society more humane for all the people we can make the difference. We have learned to collaborate across denominational lines, and the issues before us transcend partisan politics. They are, above all, human needs which compel a response.

In the face of the suffering, we cannot allow ourselves to be immobilized by cynicism which will give away the future by default.

The poet, Marge Piercy, asks:

"Who can bear hope back into the world but us ... all of us who have seen the face of hope at least once in vision, in dream ...Who shall bear hope, who else but us?"

Clinton's economics: a roundup of opinions

The Reaganaut strategy was always to run up enormous deficits and then use them as a club to batter the Democrats into submission. It has worked. The only language coming out of Washington is gain-through-pain ranting about the need to cut the deficit, all at the expense of the people Clinton promised he'd never shaft.

There's plenty that could be done, but it would mean forcing the Federal Reserve to lower long-term interest rates by shifting its bond marketing operations to the long end of the market. But that would mean offending Wall Street, which wants to market corporate bonds (higher rates, better fees) without so much competition from government bonds. The lower the deficit, the fewer government bond issues.

There's nothing inherently wrong with deficits. The point is, what do you use them for? Under Reagan/Bush they were a way of transferring money up the social pyramid. Under Clinton they'll be the instrument with which to discipline the lower 60 percent of that pyramid, with his monstrous welfare proposals allowing states to withdraw all public assistance if they feel so inclined. Every 12 years we get a Democratic President to do the dirty work the Republicans don't have the nerve for.

Alexander Cockburn
The Nation, *Feb. 22, 1993*

The collapse of Soviet centralized economic planning and 12 years of Reaganomics should have taught us a simple lesson. The lack of competition is a recipe for inefficient production and delivery of services by competition on unregulated markets with a playing field sharply tilted by inequalities in wealth and racial and sexual discrimination is a prescription not only for waste but for rampant inequality as well.

This suggests a new approach: Level the playing field by redistributing wealth and ending discrimination and then enhance competition and accountability by ending government monopolies in the delivery of services:

- Make higher education available to everyone.
- Create federal credit programs directed toward home ownership and convert public housing through a rent-to-buy system.
- Provide subsidized credits for worker buy-outs of firms.
- Tax, at 100 percent, inherited wealth in excess of three times the value of a single family home.

Samuel Bowles and Herbet Gintis
Tikkun, *Jan-Feb 1993*

According to voters' exit polling data, 82 percent of all African Americans who voted selected Clinton. Clinton also received substantial support from Jewish voters (78 percent) and from Latinos (62 percent). The intolerant, homophobic character of the Republican's national convention was critical in mobilizing millions of American lesbians and gays behind the Democratic nominee.

Americans earning under $15,000 annually supported Clinton by 59 percent. Trade union members — 55 percent; the unemployed — 56 percent; women without a high school diploma — 58 percent; Americans over 60 — 50 percent; full-time students — 50 percent; first-time voters — 49 percent. The only upper income group which clearly aligned itself with Clinton were Americans who have postgraduate university education or degrees — 49 percent.

If African American and Latinos had stayed home, Bush would have received a narrow electoral college and popular vote victory. For example, Clinton's narrow victories in Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, New Jersey and Ohio were attributable to the African American electorate. Latinos in New Mexico, California and Colorado helped him win those states.

Manning Marable
Along the Color Line, *Dec. 1992*

As God called Israel in the words of Isaiah to bring the power of Jahweh to the nations of the world, as God called Martin Luther King to lead America out of the slavery of discrimination, I believe we in the United States are now called. Not to the Manifest Destiny of Theodore Roosevelt's colonialism, but to the servanthood of humanity. Bill Clinton comes to the presidency as the leader of the most powerful nation in the history of the world, and yet he faces the economic and social wreckage of the years of the cold war at home and abroad. He faces the chaos of the people of the world as they seek to find their identity and their destiny in the uncertain and stormy waters of liberation.

He faces the immediate decision at home between reducing the financial deficit which years of neglect have compounded: the deficit in health care for the poor, in education, in housing, in nourishment, in conservation. Neglect of this deficit will lay upon the future citizens of our land even more stringent financial problems than the mounting interest on the fiscal debt.

Paul Moore
Bishop of New York, retired,
now interim rector at
St. Bartholomew's, N.Y.C.

Beyond the New Deal: 'entrepreneurial government'

by Danny Duncan Collum

***Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, $22.95 (cloth) 405 pp., 1992.**

Reinventing Government by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler is essentially a workbook for public servants. While perhaps hoping for a marginal lay audience, the authors were clearly writing for a professional audience of bewildered and groping public-sector leaders — elected officials, agency managers, etc.

That was the core market for *Reinventing Government* when it was published last year. But then it turned out that one of the book's most enthusiastic readers, a public-sector CEO from one of America's underdeveloped zones, got elected as the first Democratic president in 16 years. Soon it became known that *Reinventing Government* would be one of the bibles of his administration. And all of a sudden a couple of earnest policy wonks (Osborne and Gaebler) were hotter than Madonna, at least in the book biz.

Osborne and Gaebler's core thesis is that government, at almost every level, is not working any more because it is designed to operate in a world that no longer exists. Our institutions, they say, were designed to serve a stable, relatively homogenous, uneducated and docile population in a steadily growing economy. They are built on a mechanical model of step-by-step processes that turn out "one-size-fits-all" services.

But our population is now a decidedly undocile patchwork of ethnic and cultural allegiances and lifestyle choices. The high-growth manufacturing economy that underpinned the traditional family, neighborhood and community of days gone by is gone. And so are the neighborhood, the sense of community and all but the last tattered and exhausted remnants of family life. Most people make their living on a treadmill of sales and service and part-time jobs and have little room in their lives for the public business. Meanwhile, the vocal public citizenry, the half of the country that still votes, is dominated as never before by hyper-educated and hyper-opinionated baby boomers. These people live and work in a world where computer technology makes an infinite variety of choices and instant action part of the daily routine. And as the Reaganauts intuited, these people's contempt and disdain for the fat, mindless, slow-motion, cigar-chomping image of the public sector is boundless. They see government as symbolized perfectly by the average courthouse line for car registration — a pointless exercise which, in the computer age, goes on only because of the vested interest of the people who actually push the paper.

And, as a corollary to the breakdown in government, Osborne and Gaebler say, our politics aren't working anymore either. This is because our two parties are committed to two equally outmoded pictures of how the world works — the New Deal model and the *laissez-faire* model.

These two models of public life have been slugging it out since 1932, but, even when the Democratic Party lost, the New Deal model always won. Then, finally, in 1980, when the New Deal model had lost all of its last vestigial appeal, the *laissez-faire* model came to power at last. This, the authors assure us, was not because the American people were really committed to *laissez-faire* ideology, but simply because no credible new alternative had yet been presented.

I sometimes wish that the unions still dominated the Democratic Party and that we all still knew the words to "Solidarity Forever." But I recognize this longing for what it is. It's a highly eccentric matter of taste, a cultural quirk, and not the sort of thing upon which you can reasonably build a strategy for social change.

The Reagan-Bush regimes ranted a lot about government inefficiencies. But they had no interest in making the public sector more efficient. They wanted instead to sabotage it. The Republicans wanted to cripple all the government mechanisms that future generations might use to promote equality and limit the privilege and power of the wealthy elite.

Danny Duncan Collum lives in New Orleans and writes about about politics and culture for *Sojourners* and *The National Catholic Reporter.*

Their political strategy required that government be kept alive, but impotent, to be used as a quadrennial bogey man.

Exhibit A: the public welfare system. In 1980, '84 and '88 the Republicans ran on a racially-coded appeal against waste and fraud in the welfare system. But, check the record, neither the Reagan nor Bush administrations ever mounted a serious attempt to reform the way welfare works — they just cut the budgets. By now even the bleedingest hearts agree that the welfare system as it exists presents poor people and their families with all the wrong incentives and fosters dependency. But the Republican administrations seemed to want their poor people dependent, demoralized and self-destructive. They just also wanted them poorer.

In Osborne and Gaebler's vision, a credible alternative to the old New Deal and *laissez-faire* visions is now in the making. It has grown up at the state and local levels where the streets must be cleaned and the children taught, regardless of shifting ideological fashions, or tax bases. They call it "entrepreneurial government," a moniker that — like Bill Clinton's "invest and grow" rhetoric, seems cleverly designed to innoculate against charges of liberalism. The entrepreneur is, of course, the god of the *laissez-faire* vision. But Osborne and Gaebler insist that the true model of the entrepreneur is not someone who piles up personal wealth for its own sake, but rather of one who *gets things done.* And efficiency, they say, knows no ideology.

Osborne and Gaebler's recipe for efficiency calls for government that is decentralized and open, that applies the tools of the marketplace — i.e. competition and performance-based rewards — to the attainment of public goods, and that is organized around results and responsiveness rather than rules. Their core idea, to my reading, is that government should steer, not row. That aphorism breaks down to mean that government should define social goals and convene a variety of groups and social forces (public, private, nonprofit, etc.) to accomplish those goals. Government should then use the steering tools of regulation, targeted taxation and investment of public funds to "structure the marketplace" in a way that will allow the desired public activity to go forward.

What government should not do, in this model, is create vast new bureaucracies to do things for people — the New Deal model. Neither should it let one sector of society (the "for-profit" one) rule to the exclusion and detriment of all others — the *laissez-faire* model. Instead government should use its power discreetly to create the circumstances in which people, and their organizations, can do things for themselves.

Bill Clinton credit: Eleanor Mill

Another, even more simplistic statement of this vision would hold that you don't throw money at your problems, and you don't throw cutbacks at your problems — you throw democracy at your problems. Our new president's version of "throwing democracy at our problems" is to say, as he did in his inaugural address, that "there is nothing wrong with American that cannot be cured by what is right with America."

Other of Clinton's Osborne-Gaeblerisms are more obvious. The transition-era open seminar on the economy was a model of the catalytic and participatory style this book trumpets. So is the

broad-based task force Hilary Rodham Clinton is convening to reform the health care system.

Health care is one of the three national crises taken up in the final chapter of *Reinventing Government.* Education and crime are the others. There the authors seek to apply their conceptual framework of "entrepreneurial government" to the solution of national problems. I, writing in mid-February, will bet dollars to doughnuts that the solution the Clinton adminstration will finally propose can be found outlined on pp. 312-314 of *Reinventing Government.* It is a version of the (old West) German system in which competitive networks of private health-care providers operate in a marketplace heavily regulated by government for cost and accessibility.

I am one leftist — of mid-baby boom vintage — who will admit to a certain nostalgia for the New Deal mindset and worldview. I've always thought that the Popular Front represented the apex of American political culture in this worn-out old century. I sometimes wish that the unions still dominated the Democratic Party and that we all still knew all the words to "Solidarity Forever," if not "The Internationale."

But I recognize this longing for what it is. It's a highly eccentric matter of taste, a cultural quirk, and not the sort of thing upon which you can reasonably build a strategy for social change. We live in a time when what is needed is to reweave the fabric of community in American life and to rebuild the base of good-paying U.S. manufacturing jobs. Almost every problem that faces us can be subsumed somewhere under those two intertwined goals. And we can no longer afford to quibble about which ideological buzzwords are invoked in the process of attaining them.

What is needed is to reweave the fabric of community in American life and to rebuild the base of good-paying U.S. manufacturing jobs. We can no longer afford to quibble about which ideological buzzwords are invoked in the process of attaining them.

That is why, despite the way that Tom Harkin, and in his own quirky way, Jerry Brown, both pushed my personal cultural buttons, I voted for Bill Clinton in last year's Super Tuesday Democratic primaries. Well, there is the fact that he's an anti-racist Southerner. I'll admit that I like that. But mainly I wanted to beat George Bush, and I wanted to get a few things done for this country and its people, my own family included, before it's too late.

My reading is that Bill Clinton comes into office with an understanding of where America's core problems lie, and with a burning desire to get things done, and, yes, to win another term. He clearly sees himself as the "new paradigm" messiah that Osborne and Gaebler half-predict. This is the new leader who will come along at the right moment to embody public discontent and sweep aside the obstacles of the old order. By the time this is printed we should have some idea of whether it's working. TW

The Republican legacy

The official Federal government measure of poverty is the income required to meet the threshold of minimum need to feed, clothe and house a family. It includes only cash income and not benefits like subsidized housing, Medicaid, food stamps or other assistance. It was originally formulated by Mollie Orshansky in the Social Security Administration's Office of Research and Statistics. The 1990 level is $13,359 for a family of four.

In 1990, according to census data, 33.6 million people lived under the poverty line. The main increase was among whites and Hispanics.

One in four children, a total of 12 million, are in poverty. The majority are white, live outside big cities and belong to households where at least one parent works. For black children under six, one in two lives in poverty.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, the increase in child poverty is 40 percent due to decline in government support, 30 percent to falling real wages and 30 percent due to the rise in mother-only families. Families headed by women have a poverty rate of 34.5 percent and account for nearly half of all poor families.

Since 1980, the share of national after-tax household income has decreased for every income group except the wealthiest 20 percent. Since 1972, real wages, adjusted for inflation, have fallen 19 percent. From 1973 to 1987, the median earnings for all heads of families under age 30 fell by more than 36 percent, the largest drop occurring during the 1980s. The median income for young black families dropped from $16,091 in 1967 to $10,615 in 1987.

—John Vogelsang,
Consultant to churches and non-profit-organizations, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Disciple and ruler: Jean Bertrand Aristide

Michigan's Cranbrook Peace Foundation recently hosted Jean Bertrand Aristide, exiled president of Haiti. Many prestigious political and religious leaders were present for his address, which promised love as the answer to all dilemmas, even to a violent coup d'etat.

Struck by Aristide's confidence that love could restore democracy (and coincidently his presidency), some wondered whether his seemingly naive speech was Christ-like. Others speculated that it was less naive than politic, since he needs U.S. support to restore him to power.

So, here's the testimony of a man, ordained a Roman Catholic priest and rejected by the Vatican because he became a political leader, who speaks as an exiled head of state:

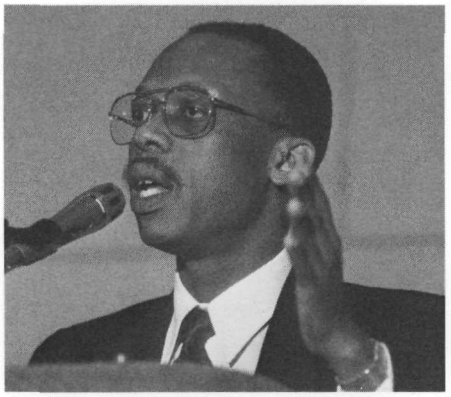
In 1804, the Hatiian people resolved to break the bonds of slavery and we did. We created the first black nation.

In December, 1990, Haiti once again resolved to break the chains of a dictatorship and soar towards democracy. The [new] government was approved by an overwhelming 77.7 percent of the vote.

From February 1991 to September 1991, we saw the Haitians staying in Haiti, in spite of misery. And a lot of Haitians were coming back to Haiti to feed the political process.

The flight to democracy was not peaceful, but the Gospel taught us about peace. We love those who did crimes against humanity, and we'll continue to love them, because for us there is no peace without love.

On September 13, 1991, when the *coup* happened, I was in the palace. Hundreds and hundreds of soldiers with weapons were shooting. Finally, even if I had more than 700 militants ready to fight with me in the palace, I had to make a decision: to give the order to shoot those



Jean Bertrand Aristide credit: Larry Kaplan

with General Cedras or to do it in a better way.

Because of what I learned from the poor people, because of what I learned from the Gospel, I decided to go out of the palace with my hands raised, to talk to those who were shooting us.

General Cedras asked the soldiers, "Now what do you want me to do with him?" And some of them said, "Well, just shoot him." And some others said, "No, you don't have to do that." Maybe God also helped them to get divided and because they were I'm still alive.

Now, Haiti's struggle for peace and democracy has been interrupted. People can say, "I will not pay tax" and believe, through a nonviolent way, we will have a solution.

Just as the slaves of pre-independent Haiti had to first realize that slavery was not a natural condition and that a change in the political structure of society would transform the conditions of life there, so too Haitians proclaim that we do not simply happen to be poor and oppressed, but that this poverty and oppression is largely a problem of the way that society is organized. In theology of liberation we call it a social sin.

In the name of God, we must change this structure of exploitation to build the kingdom of peace and justice.

The only thing we need is the support of the international community passing from statements to actions. We would call this the fruits of love, the fruits of peace. We believe President-elect Clinton may be the man who will pass from statements to actions.

The example of Haiti does not stand in isolation. World statistics demonstrate that nations have continuously and systematically allowed members of the flock to be interrupted on the flight towards peace. Too often, they are the weakest members of the flock. Millions of children die each year before reaching the age of five. In Haiti, for each 10,000 Haitians, we have 1.8 doctors. We are not ashamed to say that because it's a result of a bad politics.

Politics ought to be different, serving people instead of using people. If I cannot love you, how can I talk about love for God?" TW

Many American persons of faith are fasting in solidarity with 274 Haitian citizens currently encircled with barbed wire in the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service concedes that these people are *political* refugees, i.e. likely to be endangered if deported, but because they have tested positive for HIV they have been prohibited from entering the U.S.

Photographer **Larry Kaplan** is the Cranbrook Peace Foundation's executive director.

In the courtyard with Peter
on the anniversary of the L.A. riots

by Ched Myers

This we do know: Our cause is just; our cause is moral; our cause is right.

President George Bush,
January 29, 1991
State of the Union address
during Gulf War

People, I just want to say, can we all get along? Can we stop making it horrible for the older people and the kids? ...We're all stuck here for awhile. Let's try to work it out.

Rodney Glen King, May 1, 1992
Press statement during
Los Angeles Uprising

Ched Myers works for the American Friends Service Committee in California and is author of *Binding the Strong Man*, Orbis, 1988. An expanded version of this article will appear in his next book, *Who Will Roll Away the Stone?* Orbis, 1994. Artist **Robert Hodgell** lives in Bradenton, Fla.

Enter again the sacred circle of Story. Begin again at the end, as we are ever invited to do.

Peter had followed Jesus at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest (Mk 14:54). Twilight. The fisherman finds himself standing in the palace courtyard of the Holy City, a very long way from home. It is the end of the line for him. Jesus has just been arrested by the Jerusalem authorities. His *compañeros* have fled for their lives.

Peter is trying to fulfill his vow to follow Jesus "to the end" (14:29). Having managed to slip into the courtyard he mingles *incognito* with armed security guards and expressionless functionaries. He is just outside the courtroom where Jesus is being arraigned. Near enough to hear Jesus' screams from the holding cell where he is being tortured during interrogation.

He was sitting with the guards, warming himself at their fire. Dusk turns to deep night. The howls of pain from inside have stopped. A prevaricatory court has convened, and imperial justice

The Denial (linocut)

is being dispensed. History-as-usual, like a drunk in a dark alley, stumbles forward, unaware that a corner is about to be turned.

"You too were with that Nazarene?!" (14:67). Then suddenly, at the very moment Jesus is summarily condemned to the *via crucis* inside the palace, Peter's cover is blown out in the courtyard (14:66-72). It is a servant to the high priest who recognizes him, no doubt from earlier Temple skirmishes.

This is Peter's moment of truth, and consequences. It is the "hour" Jesus promised would sooner or later present itself to those invited to discipleship (8:34; 13:11; 14:37). So goes Markan irony: Inside the guards taunt the shackled Jesus to "prophesy," while outside the very scenario he foresaw inexorably unfolds (14:65f).

credit: Robert Hodgell

"I do *not* know what you are talking about!!" (14:68). Gripped by conflicting loyalties in the imperial vice, Peter makes the fateful choice — he seeks refuge in the shadow world of Denial.

And he began to curse his life (14:71). Who wouldn't curse their life at such a dead end? Curse religion, or politics, or history, or one's parents, or friends, or one's own choices—curse everything that conspires to bring us to such moments. Then finally, cornered and cowering, Peter swears his oath of dissociation. Disconnection is the inevitable fruit of Denial, the decisive departure from the *via crucis*.

Peter's moment of truth in the Palace Courtyard uniquely captures the struggle with denial that characterizes First World Christianity "in the belly of the beast."

It is almost dawn. A rooster's hoarse croon drifts hauntingly in the sudden stillness. Then, slowly, like a stake being driven into his heart, Peter's soul begins to implode, and he breaks down in bitter weeping.

His inconsolable sobbing echoes through the ages, resonating whenever believers have betrayed the vision they held dearest. For two millennia of the "Christian era" it has kept welling up as the church has struggled with its own apostasy. Today, in the waning years of the twentieth century, in the twilight of a different imperial courtyard, this lament again lodges in our hearts.

In the *locus imperium* we Christians too have tried to "follow Jesus at a distance." We too are being confronted by the ignominy of our historical project. We too are realizing our Denial.

In the courtyard twilight

I live in a war zone, where violence is a way of life. It is a wild fire raging across the world and a tree smoldering steadily at its core. It is my home, Los Angeles, Ca., in the United States of America.

According to the dominant culture's Dream of itself, I do not live in a war zone at all. The official story portrays my country through fantasies of grandiosity: land of the free, home of the brave, hope of the democratic world. The Dream Factrory portrays my hometown through fantasies of whimsy (La-La-land and *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous)* or law and order (from *Dragnet* to *L.A. Law.*)

I know my country and my city are increasingly defined by two things: by a *gulf* and by *guns.* An ever-deepening gulf between the rich and poor, and an inexhaustible proliferation of guns. The gulf is illustrated by the voices at the start, one belonging to a man who abusively policed the world, the other belonging to a man who took a world of abuse from the police.

I live in a country that exports war against the poor around the world, covertly from Nicaragua to Mozambique, overtly from Grenada to Iraq. It seeds a home-grown war against its own poor, from Miami to Watts, from the Rio Grande valley to Akwesasne. I live in a city that built its prosperity manufacturing the tools of military export.

Our society is among the most indebted, stratified and violent in the world.

As the U.S. empire has come to full flower in the 20th century, unrivaled in its global reach and military strength, our duplicity has become increasingly evident. Evident, that is, to those viewing the world from the killing fields of Guatemala or Mozambique or East Timor, from the housing projects of south Los Angeles ganglands or the refugee trail through Sonora borderlands or the health clinics in Lakota badlands.

It is not as evident however to those of us who, by reason of race, class and/or gender are inheritors of the imperial system. And it is certainly not evident in our official narratives about ourselves — whether in religion, education, entertainment, media or government — according to which we continue to be the epitome of the grand design of Progress, the engine driving history, the best society ever built, the *Pax Americana.*

Any suggestion of imperial hubris is dismissed: no people has been as convinced of its own benevolence and innocence. This is the power of our culture of denial. "I do *not* know what you are talking about!" screamed Peter when confronted in the Palace Courtyard with the truth about himself.

This is life in the *locus imperium*, and for those of us trying to be disciples in the lengthening shadows of its twilight, it is *our* moment of truth in the Palace Courtyard.

We must choose between those who see no future for the *locus imperium* — its gulf and its guns — and those who see no future without it. Which voice will we pay attention to? The gulf and the guns are what Bush believes to be "just and moral and right"; they are what King identifies as "making it horrible for the older people and the kids." These are choices of great consequence, choices we can refuse only by denying what we know in our heart of hearts.

We would do well to allow Mark's circle of story to shape our own. Peter, as the first (1:16) and last (16:7) disciple in the story, is *archetypal*: we are *meant* to identify with him. His life runs the gamut of human emotions; it bounces around between grandiosity (14:29) and depression (14:37f). His story is ours. Given the benefit of the doubt, we love Jesus, and have vowed, perhaps even stridently, to follow him. We have recognized him as Messiah—it is just that we don't understand what that really means.

Yet we First World Christians are more comfortable in the Palace Courtyard than Peter ever could have been. We participate obediently in its political mechanisms (and machinations). Presidents and military leaders sit in our churches.

In the Courtyard we are proximate to Palace power, although perhaps we feel frustratingly impotent. If we listen hard enough we can hear the screams of the victims of imperial justice. We know Jesus stands with them, but we can't seem to bridge the distance between us and him—or them. It is easier to enjoy the distractions of *petite bourgeois* pleasures, to retreat to the comfort of Palace Courtyard religion. And when the evening shadows of history chill us to the bone, we huddle around the fire tended by the imperial police—chagrined, yellow ribbons pinned to our lapels.

We may be well-intentioned, but we are not innocent. Our true allegiances, which shape our social practice daily, which determine our net worth and our career aspirations, will sooner or later be revealed. Perhaps, as with Peter, it will be functionaries in service of the *status quo* who will unmask us; they always seem to have the best nose for our vulnerabilities and contradictions, and are able to recognize the conflict in our souls by our trembling voice.

We want to follow Jesus, but we also want to stay on good terms with the Palace. And so, often unwittingly, we betray our own convictions about what is good and just and compassionate. In the courtrooms of empire, Jesus and the poor lose-and-therefore-gain their lives by choosing the Gospel (8:35). Outside in the Courtyard we gain-and-therefore-lose our lives by choosing to live in denial.

We are conformed by the imperial vice until we cannot distinguish the emperor's voice from our own, much less our Lord's. *We* are the "adulterous and sinful generation" which refuses to "see the Human One" revealed on the cross (8:38f), who will only believe if he "comes down off it" (14:32).

Peter's moment of truth in the Palace Courtyard uniquely captures the struggle with denial that characterizes First World Christianity "in the belly of the beast."

But the gospel is not finally tragedy; it is good news to all — *even and especially us.* To those who face their denial and come to the end of their illusions is ever extended the grace of new beginnings.

To those who face their denial and come to the end of their illusions is ever extended the grace of new beginnings. After the debacle of betrayal comes yet one more invitation to discipleship.

After the debacle of betrayal comes yet one more invitation to discipleship: "Go, tell the disciples *and Peter* that Jesus is going before you" (16:7).

There is no wayward narrative that cannot be redeemed by an historical choice to follow the Way anew. But the Way renewed is *still* the via crucis. TW

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

At present, 54 percent of federal income tax revenue goes to past and present military spending.

While the U.S. ranks first in military expenditures, it ranks fifth in adult literacy, eighth in life expectancy, sixteenth in percent of women in total university enrollment, eighteenth in infant mortality rate, and eighteenth in ratio of physicians to population.

Symbolic or actual resistance to the militarization of the U.S. federal budget is expressed by many in the form of tax resistance.

Resisters avoid paying taxes by earning less than a taxable income ($6,000 for an individual) or earning wages in an occupation that is not recorded; by failing to file tax returns; by filing and refusing all or a portion of their federal tax assessment; by refusing to pay the federal telephone tax.

Refusing the federal telephone tax, imposed as a "temporary" tax by the War Tax Revenue Act of 1914, has the mildest consequences. Since the amount refused is fairly small, the IRS generally does not pursue collection.

In 1990, the telephone tax became permanent at three percent. At that time, it was declared that the money would be used for child care, although it still goes into the General Fund, the majority of which is spent on the military. This tax has raised $30 billion since 1966.

Generally, the telephone company cannot legally disconnect telephone service for nonpayment of the tax and can even be subject to Federal Communications Commission action if it does. (For advice, see address below.)

Sooner or later most federal income tax resisters end up in the IRS collection process. Chances are good (although not guaranteed) that, at worst, civil penalties will be pursued.

For those who enter the IRS collection process with the intent of firm resistance to the end, the likelihood of criminal

Roman Denar

Tax Resistance: April 15, 1993

penalties, including imprisonment, will increase (but remain unlikely.) Out of the thousands of people who engage in some form of resistance fewer than 20 have gone to jail for resistance since World War II. The longest time served so far was seven months. Most who have been jailed were sentenced for related charges, such as contempt of court for refusing to cooperate with the IRS despite a court order.

IRS collection efforts

The IRS rarely pursues seizure, but it does have the right to sell property to satisfy the "debt." Ordinarily this is preceded by a 30-day written notice of intent to levy.

The IRS is most likely to pursue cash, bank accounts and wages.

Property legally exempt from seizure includes: $1,100 worth of clothing, school books, books and tools related to the job; undelivered mail; unemployment benefits; worker's compensation; military and railroad pensions; court-ordered amounts required for child support; income equal to the amount per pay period that would be nontaxable; for head of family, $1,650 worth of fuel, provisions, furniture, personal effects, poultry or livestock and arms for personal use.

The IRS has a practice of exempting items it is not legally required to exempt including: welfare benefits, medicare benefits, social security benefits and many types of pension plans.

Depending on the personal and marital property laws of a state, married couples in which only one spouse is a resister can consider holding assets in the name of the other spouse. An experienced counselor or lawyer should know state-specific laws.

The IRS may choose to discontinue collection efforts if it costs the IRS more to seize property than is owed.

Civil penalties

Civil penalties, administrative or court-imposed, are designed to recoup the loss to the IRS and include fines and penalties. They cannot result in imprisonment (unless one is held in contempt of court).

Penalties can be assessed for not filing; not paying; fraud; negligence; filing a "frivolous" return; filing a false W-4; refusing to comply with a court order.

Criminal penalties

Criminal penalties, which can only be imposed by a court, are rare for war tax resisters, but they are possible and they are punitive. Penalties range from misdemeanors to felonies, include one- to five-year jail penalties and fines from $100,000 to $500,000.

The information on this page is taken largely from material distributed by the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. For further information, write NWTRCC, P.O. Box 774, Monroe, Maine 04951.

When you *can* not pay

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

What happened when a divorced computer analyst living in Staten Island, N.Y., lost his apartment and nearly everything he owned in an arsonist-set fire?

When the tragedy changed his priorities and he decided to spend the rest of his life painting?

When this decision left him without access to a regular income?

When he was unable to find another affordable apartment and ended up sharing a "squat" in a city-owned-and-abandoned building on Manhattan's Lower East Side?

When he found himself homeless again after this building, too, was destroyed by fire?

And when the Internal Revenue Service first sent him a bill for over $11,000 and then another for $30,000?

What happened was that John-Ed Croft, the man faced with this litany of misfortunes, responded in a most unconventional way.

He embarked upon a public campaign to pay his tax bill entirely with returnable aluminum cans (the "currency of the streets," as he calls them). He also used the opportunity to draw attention to the relationship between tax dollars, homelessness, and government and personal responsibility. And he kept on making paintings.

"I see more and more talented people living in the streets, living three and four in a room, living in abandoned buildings," Croft wrote in an open letter to the I.R.S. in 1992, "If the people in charge would stop drinking martinis and start drinking chocolate milk and stop giving my tax money away to foreign powers (most of them dictators) so they can buy weapons, America and the world would be a better place to live in."

Croft's trouble with the I.R.S. began in 1981 when he sent a letter to the agency informing them that he would stop filing tax returns until the federal government justified directing his money toward foreign dictators and weapons systems instead of much-needed social programs.

The I.R.S. responded by sending him a bill and trying to repossess his 1981 Pontiac, which he no longer drives because of poor eyesight. Croft, with the help of his friends, decided to pay off the tax bill entirely with cans, which they began delivering and sending to the I.R.S. After several years of this process, he estimates that he will need 700,000 cans to meet the debt.

A number of other homeless and formerly homeless artists have founded "The Struggle for the Freedom to Create," which held art exhibits open to anyone who wanted to participate. By July, 1989, The Freedom to Create had its own gallery space, The Chocolate Milk Art Gallery, in a squatter's building on East 7th Street in Manhattan. Croft and another artist, Annie Q., became co-directors. (It was this building, where some of the artists also lived, that was destroyed by fire in March, 1990.)

The group also organized shows with titles like "Artists Who Make Less than

art and society

Blaise Tobia and **Virginia Maksymowicz,** Philadelphia artists, edit the Art & Society Section of *The Witness.*

$100,000/Year" for exhibit at Marymount College, Fordham University, and various galleries around the city.

In 1988, Croft and five others sued the national government under the McKinney Act, which mandates that unused federal buildings be offered to the homeless. He won his case and then used his victory to make a point about the absurdity of the locations offered, such as a missile site near Tucson — desolate places isolated from any sort of human services.

Throughout this period, the genius of their approach was its highly visual nature, sense of irony, synthesis of important issues and ability to attract wide media coverage.

Meanwhile, in her own work, Annie Q. directly addressed church communities. In one instance, she placed a life-size sculpture of a homeless woman huddled in a refrigerator box in front of the altar at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

She subsequently started publishing a newsletter by and for the homeless, *Voices To and From the Streets*, and she coordinates a small business, *Voices and Visions from the Margins*, that distributes cards and crafts created by the homeless. Both projects have been sponsored by South Presbyterian Church in Dobbs Ferry, New York.

John-Ed Croft says he has retired from his activism and wants to concentrate on painting. He hasn't received any news about the current status of his tax debt. However, the word on the street is that aluminum cans still can be sent to the I.R.S. Collection Department, "For the account of John-Ed Croft," P.O. Box 2825, Church Street Station, New York, N.Y., 10008.

Regular publication of *Voices* newsletter has been suspended due to funding problems, but the *Voices* catalogue can be ordered by sending $1.00 to South Press, 343 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., 10522. TW

In a stranger's guise

by Ann Scott

One afternoon, several weeks before Christmas, I found myself crumpled on a downtown sidewalk in San Francisco, leaning on a building a few doors down from one of the city's best shopping complexes. I fought to take in enough oxygen to stay conscious. Nobody who was anybody noticed.

Shoppers and business types walked around me without a glance. A police van rolled by without hesitation. Probably hundreds of people on that busy street made a point not to notice a fairly well-dressed woman, sitting propped against a building, breathing in a shallow, panicky way.

Suddenly he was there, an old man who was quite possibly the dirtiest person I'd ever seen. He stared for what seemed a long time. My fingers tightened on my purse (I hoped unobtrusively). "Need help getting up?" he half-whispered, finally, reaching out a hand. I nodded, but he was too frail to do it alone, so he shuffled away without comment. I was a little relieved and went back to focusing on yoga breathing to relieve lung spasms.

I had felt lousy for weeks, but the doctor had poked and pressed and announced he didn't know — tests were inconclusive. Chronic fatigue syndrome was the only guess that had a name. Whatever the disease, it landed me on the street and I was terrified.

Some ten minutes later the old man shuffled back. This time with a younger, stronger, somewhat cleaner member of the homeless population. She was more verbal and asked me what was wrong.

"Sounds like pneumonia," she said. "Your cheeks are too red." (The woman was absolutely right. It was a hidden bacterial pneumonia and it might have killed me if left untreated.)

"Tell us when you're ready to get up," she said. They walked to a nearby concrete ledge and sat down. More "upright" citizens walked by, but after the first quick peek, it was eyes straight ahead for every one of them. My only chance of getting up was with the help of two people who scared me.

I was getting calm enough to realize the pavement cold was beginning to seep in, so I called them over. What I wanted more than anything was the warmth and safety of my car, parked nearby.

He pulled and she pushed and I was upright, first try. I didn't want to insult them, but I could see they needed money so I asked if I could give them some. She answered by saying they would walk with me to my car. I worried whether they would steal it once I opened the door, but my choices were limited. When we got to the car they just stood there, so I offered them money, again, which she took graciously for both of them.

It was stupid, but I drove 25 miles home before getting medical help. As the traffic inched along, I had time to think of all the times I, like some of the upright examples in the story of the Good Samaritan, have "passed by on the other side." Involvement is too risky and time-consuming for those of us who are overbusy with our jobs and homes and families. Our aversion to people in need makes a mockery of the word "community."

During a traffic jam on the Bay Bridge a Celtic prayer of hospitality that hung next to my parents' front door popped into my mind. It concludes:

And the lark said in her song,
Often, often, often goes the
Christ in the Stranger's guise.

Ann Scott lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and is editor of the *Pacific Church News*, the newpaper of the Episcopal Diocese of California. She has been a journalist since 1964.

Caesar has an *obligation*

Why do five million women of childbearing age abuse one drug or another? Are there five million "bad" women?

Two previous federal administrations have seemed inclined to think so, taking a "just-say-no" approach grounded in the belief that diseases caused by personal behavior are not government's problem.

But Reed Tuckson, president of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Los Angeles, Calif., and former commissioner of public health in Washington, D.C., disagrees, especially when it comes to those citizens living without the benefit of strong social and economic safety nets.

"Health is the place where all the social forces converge to express themselves with the greatest clarity," Tuckson says.

"I look at the common diseases that are out there [heart disease and cancer; chemical dependency, homicide and suicide; violence, accidents and trauma; HIV diseases] and I'm struck by the fact that all those diseases have their origin in this society."

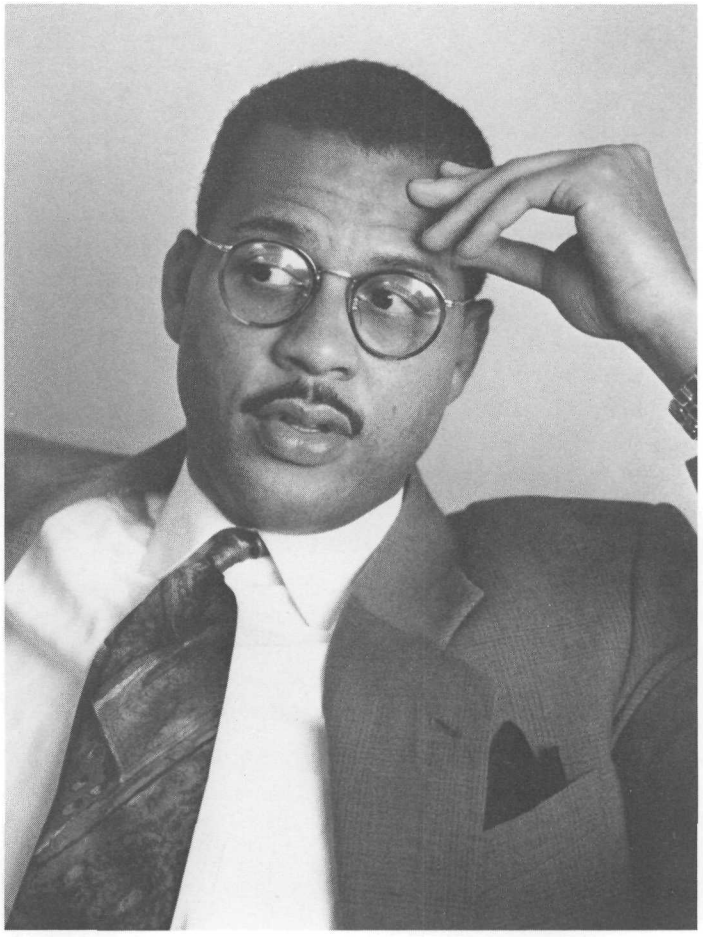
The moral will required to address self-induced diseases in U.S. society is public not personal, according to Tuckson.

But the Bush administration disagreed.

They made "a very strong argument about the issue of character in our culture. They say that people need to take responsibility for their lives and, of course, no one in his/her right mind would ever disagree with that. But then they stop rather dramatically to engage in magical thinking.

"Magical thinking goes like this: Now that we've reminded you that you've acted in inappropriate ways, you should start acting in appropriate ways. Disregard the fact that there are drug dealers on the corner, that people are getting murdered every day in your neighborhood, that you don't have a job. If we just say, 'Do right and behave,' then everyone will stop, do right and behave.

"I'm concerned about the reluctance to mobilize and organize the various resources necessary to give individuals a chance to do the things we want them to do, to create the space and the incentive to actually change their life. We are not seeing this as a priority.



Reed Tuckson

"If you don't believe in the possibility of a meaningful future, you're not going to take the behavioral steps consistent with trying to achieve that future. You're going to smoke cigarettes, and you're not going to be worried about diet."

People need functional educations and jobs, Tuckson believes. Attention must also be paid to developing the community infrastructure.

Tuckson recalls a Wednesday-night clinic his public health department set up in an effort to provide health services for the working poor. Most could not get to the department's "regular" clinics because those facilities typically close at 4:45 p.m., the end of the governmental working day. When budget problems arose, the city told the department to shut the after-hours clinic down. Tuckson and other health department employees decided to keep it open on a volunteer basis.

"One evening a woman got off the bus and came in. 'I can't believe you're open,' she said. 'The lights are on. It's eight o'clock at night. I just got off work. I need some help.' When I asked her what the problem was, she said, 'I'm six months

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This piece is adapted from an interview with Tuckson in *Second Opinion*, a quarterly journal edited by Martin E. Marty and published by the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith and Ethics. Subscription information can be obtained by writing *Second Opinion*, 211 E. Ontario, Suite 800, Chicago, Ill., 60611.

pregnant and I'm addicted to cocaine and I need help.' And we decided to love her, care about her, and work with her, instead of threatening to lock her up. We asked her, in the course of things, why she did drugs: 'Didn't you see the commercials we put on television? Didn't you read the literature we kept giving out? Why didn't you just say no?'

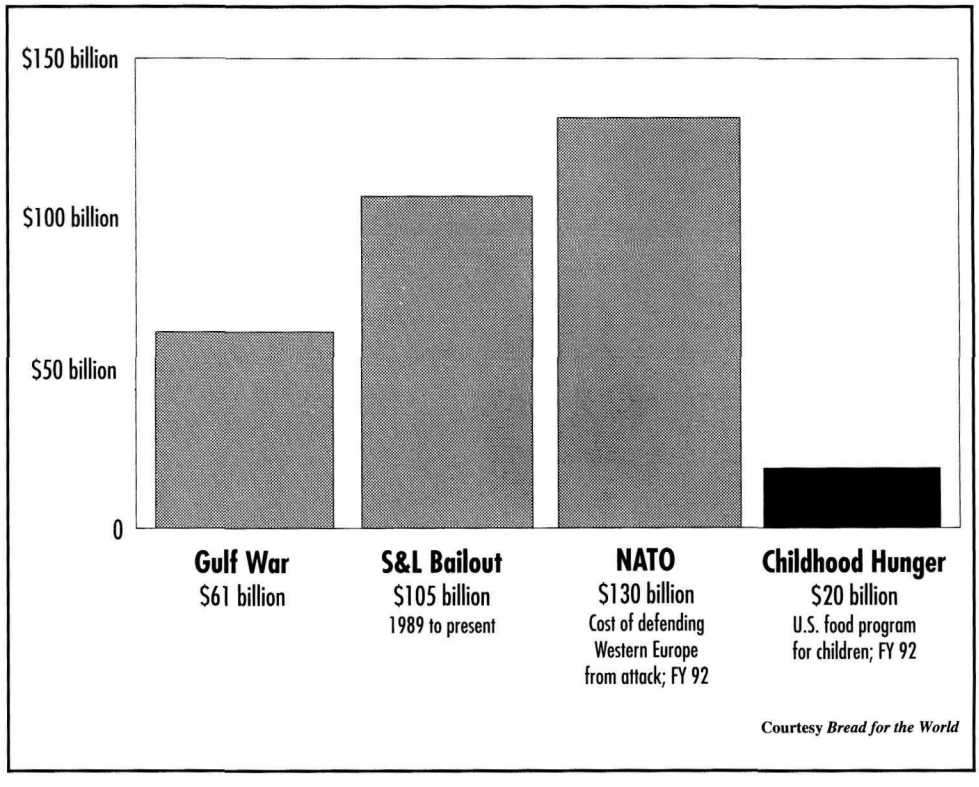
"She answered, 'I don't want to make an excuse or justify it. I'll just tell you what happened to me. Life is very hard for me. I am abused by the people in my house and outside of my house. I am so tired of waking up in the morning to the daily death count and so tired at night of hearing the bullets go whizzing past my window. I'm tired of seeing the syringes and needles all around. I'm tired of the confusion, the chaos. I'm working and I'm hardly making anything. I can't get out of this environment and I'm tired. I'm alone and I watch TV and there are these commercials. I read the magazines with ads for alcohol, cigarettes. I should look like I'm on the beach in Bermuda smoking a cigarette. I can't go to Bermuda, but I could go to the corner and buy a $5 piece of crack and escape and I did. I know I shouldn't have, but I did. And once I started, the way the drug works, I got addicted. It's just so hard to break it. It's so deep within me. I'm not having fun. I don't like it. I don't want to feel this way. I don't want to do this. I want to stop. I don't like it, but it's just hard. I can't do it by myself. There's no place to go.'

"For me, this woman epitomized the whole set of issues," Tuckson reflected. "We gave her drug treatment in the clinic. The guy that ran [the public health department's] drug treatment program volunteered. He was the drug counselor. We worked with her. We encouraged her to bring her boyfriend. He came in. We worked with them as a couple, as a family group, and she came regularly. She delivered a baby. A normal, healthy, good baby. It was a success. We were happy."

"To accomplish anything, Americans first have to care about whether their countrymen and women are living or dying. We have to care that every year 40,000 babies die in the first year of life. We have to care that the life expectancy of black males is still decreasing."

— Reed Tuckson

Shortly after this experience, Tuckson moved into private sector health care, saying that he was frustrated by the lack of support he had in the public sector. At the March of Dimes, Tuckson says he was able to advocate for a change in the public climate through research, community services, programs for model education and service delivery and professional education programs. "To accomplish anything, Americans first have to care about whether their countrymen and women are living or dying. We have to care that every year 40,000 babies die in the first year of life. We have to care that the life expectancy of black males is still decreasing. We have to care about the 250,000 babies born with birth defects every year. Whether our babies live or die has to be the most important indicator of what's happening in this society and what the quality of life is. What is more important than that?" TW



In these two traditions, covenantal and sacramental, we hear two voices of divinity from nature. One speaks from the mountaintops in the thunderous masculine tones of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." It is the voice of power and law, but speaking (at its most authentic) on behalf of the weak, as a mandate to protect the powerless and to restrain the power of the mighty. There is another voice, one that speaks from the intimate heart of matter. It has long been silenced by the masculine voice, but today is finding her own voice. This is the voice of Gaia. Her voice does not translate into laws or intellectual knowledge, but beckons us into communion.

Both of these voices, of God and of Gaia, are our own voices.

We need both of these holy voices. We cannot depend on volunteerism alone to save rain forests and endangered species, set limits to the exploitation of animals and sanction abusers. We need organized systems and norms of ecological relations. Otherwise, not only will most people not comply, but will not be able to comply, because they have no way of fulfilling their daily needs except through the exigencies of the present system. But, without the second voice, our laws have no heart, no roots in compassion and fellow feeling. They fail to foster a motivating desire for biophilic living.

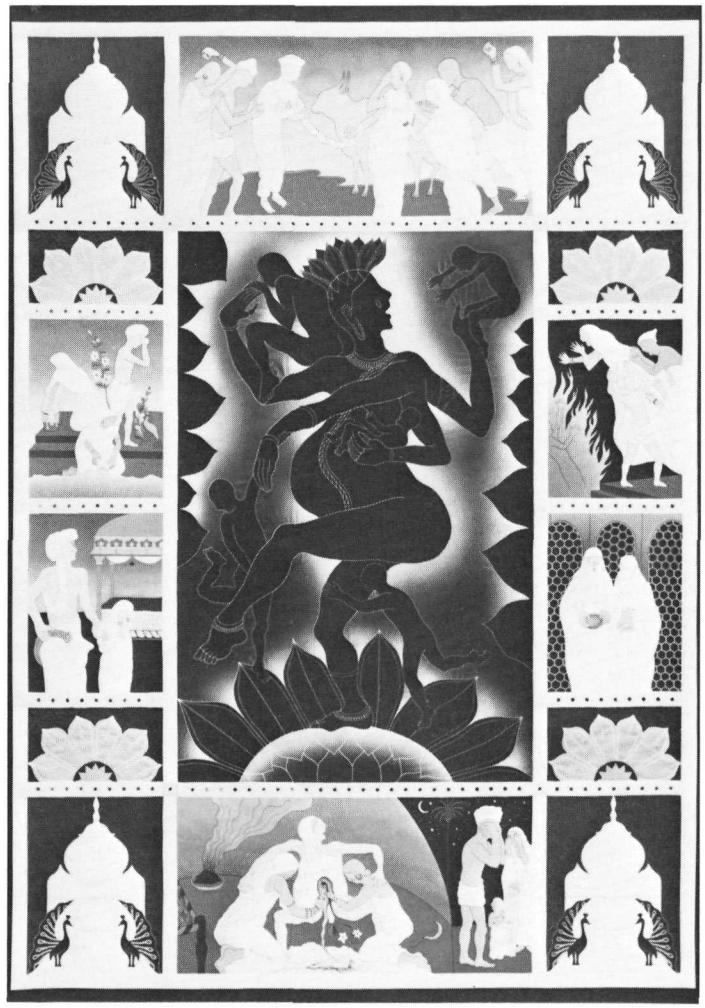
We need a foundation for the ethical theory that is not based on a dualistic negation of the "other," whether woman or animal or body, pagans, gentiles or barbarians (or the countercultural reversal of these projections) as the bearers of our "shadow." This does not mean that there is no such thing as evil. The difference between starving a child or torturing a prisoner, and nurturing their lives, is real, and reflect decisions made by actual people.

But the reality of evil does not live in some "thing" out there. It cannot be escaped, and indeed is exacerbated by efforts to avoid it by cutting ourselves off from that "thing." Rather, evil lies in "wrong relationship."

Only as [a] system of exploitation reaches its maximal stage does it begin to undermine the quality of life of those at the "top," and thus force them to recognize that the whole house of cards is about to topple. Their first instinct is to stave off this demise by accelerating the exploitation of those they dominate, while seeking to maintain their own comfortable life-style. The rich try to stay rich while the poor get poorer, and the destruction of the environment increases.

Eventually the whole system collapses.

How do we carry on a struggle to heal the world and to build a new biospheric community in the face of this intransigent system of death? It is my belief that those who want to carry on this struggle in a sustained way must build strong base communities of celebration and resistance. By "base communities" I mean local face-to-face groups with which one lives, works and prays.



Mother India, from Judy Chicago's *Birth Project*

Law & heart: God & Gaia

by Rosemary R. Reuther

 Reuther is professor of theology at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, Ill. *Mother India* is by artist Judy Chicago, working with Judy Kendall, Judith Meyers, Jacqueline Moore and group in Greeley, Colo.

There are three interrelated aspects of the work of such local communities. One is shaping the personal therapies, spiritualities and corporate liturgies by which we nurture and symbolize a new biophilic consciousness. Second, there is the utilization of local institutions over which we have some control, our homes, schools, churches, farms and locally controlled businesses, as pilot projects of ecological living. Third, there is the building of organizational networks that reach out, regionally, nationally and internationally, in a struggle to change the power structures that keep the present death system in place.

We need healing therapies and spiritualities of inner growth to let go of fears and open up to each other and to the world around us, to learn how to *be*, rather than to *strive*. The struggle to change the death system must be deeply rooted in joy in the goodness of life.

Making healing and inner growth available to us all means unhooking them from professionalized "help," which comes with credentials and high price tags. Although there is a place for skilled people, what most of us need is fairly simple and "free."

We can survey ideas from a few good books, gather on a regular basis to discuss the ideas from "experts," and then begin to open up to each other and learn to become good "ears" for hearing each other's story. We also need to recover our body-psyche-spirit nexus, to learn to breathe again, to feel our life energy. Small groups can learn and teach each other techniques of breathing, biofeedback, meditation and massage.

We need to take the time to sit under trees, look at water and at the sky, observe small biotic communities of plants and animals with close attention, get back in touch with the living earth. We can start to release the stifled intuitive and creative powers of our organism, to draw and to write poetry, and to know that we stand on holy ground.

In addition to personal therapies and spirituality, we need corporate liturgies as well to symbolize and express our altered consciousness. Unfortunately most of our institutional forums of worship are tied to alienated, patriarchal consciousness. Much of their worship is literally "deadly," although some are open to partial transformation. Thus communities of new being and consciousness need to become their own liturgists. They need to learn to shape corporate liturgies to mourn together for violated lives, to midwife healing and new birth, and to taste a new creation already present.

Such communities can also learn to carry liturgy to the streets, in protest marches and demonstrations that cry out against the death system and visualize renewed life in ways that can catch the imagination of others who participate in them or watch them. We can call on all the arts — song and music, dance and mime, posters and banners, costumes and puppetry — to shape public liturgies of biospheric politics. TW

Against despair

Whether we speak of Augustine's identification of slavery with the sins of the slaves, Luther's stand against the Peasants' Revolt, the white American church's endorsement of black slavery, or contemporary Euro-American theology's indifference toward the political embodiment of the gospel, it is unquestionably clear that the dominant representatives of the Christian tradition, both Protestant and Catholic, have contributed to the political oppression of humanity by defending the economic interests of the rich against the poor.

Recently the assumed separation between faith and political praxis has been seriously challenged by the appearance of liberation theologies in North and South America, Africa, and Asia. Whether we speak of black theology, feminist theology, or African theology, liberation theology in all its forms rejects the dichotomy between spiritual and physical salvation, between faith and political praxis, and insists on their dialectical relationship. This means that the gospel is inseparably connected with the bodily liberation of the poor.

But if our act against oppression is to have meaning and not be purposeless, then obedience must connect itself with a social theory of change. *Why* are people poor, and *who* benefits from their poverty?

Those who would cast their lot with the victims must not forget that the existing structures are powerful and complex. Their creators intend them to be that way, so that any action that challenges [them] will appear both immoral and useless.

We must be careful not to allow the perpetrators of official violence to create despair in our struggle for justice and peace. They will try to make us think that there is nothing we can do to end the nuclear arms race and the violence of the CIA throughout the world. But I contend that we can end it, because there can be no democratic government without the consent of the people -- that is, without our consent.

—James Cone,
***Speaking the Truth*, Eerdmans,1986**

Taxing doomsday

The IRS has a "Doomsday Plan" for collecting taxes after a nuclear war, according to David Burnham in *A Law Unto Itself: The IRS and the Abuse of Power* (Vintage Books, 1990). The plan outlines collection methods after nuclear bombs have been dropped, millions of Americans killed, and property and records destroyed.

Short takes

Democracy: an Indian legacy

by Iron Thunderhorse

Democracy did not exist in the Old World. Where then do the roots of democracy originate? Scholarly debate has pondered this same question for the past decade in order to distinguish the myths from the facts concerning our unique form of government.

European dissidents came to this land in order to escape the unrelenting pressures of feudalism, monarchies and religious oppression. As the early colonists decided to sever their ties with European government it became clear to them that an entirely new form of government was needed to protect the interests of this new breed of freedom-seekers.

The colonists didn't have far to go. The oldest form of democracy had already flourished on American soil for hundreds of years and provided a perfect model.

The aboriginal tribes of Turtle Island (i.e. North America) often banded together into alliances. The Iroquois and Algonquin Confederacies were the most powerful of these tribal networks.

Contemporary scholars have acknowledged the Iroquois Confederacy as a major source in our democratic heritage. Here's why.

Oral tradition explains that long ago a great *sachem* (Algonquin word for high chief) named Deganwidah came to the aid of the people and was able to put a stop to the atrocities of war. He became known affectionately as the Peacemaker, one who passed on a great legacy of political empowerment to the people.

Peace is not merely the absence of war, he cautioned, but the absence of violence in any shape or form. The Great Tree of Peace symbolized the unity and protection of the people. The branches denote the tribes, the trunk representing the council, and the needles symbolizing the people. Four great white roots pointed to the cardinal directions and depicted the basic wampums (laws) of the confederacy.

credit: Iron Thunderhorse

The Peacemaker asked all the warchiefs to bury their tomahawks in a hole beneath the Great Tree of Peace and enter into an alliance of friendship.

The Iroquois Confederacy originally consisted of four tribes: the Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Mohawk. Each tribe had their own clan lineages and sachems (known as Pine Tree Chiefs) represented the will of the people in council. (The Oneida and Tuscarora joined later.)

The Grand Council was governed by a set of laws known as the Great Law of Peace. Each law or wampum was numbered, similarly to any constitution.

The wampums declared that all decisions would be made with due consideration for the next seven generations to come. Provisions were made to guarantee that the voices of the women, children, elders and the sick were heard.

The wampums declared that the Clan Mothers would choose who would be a Pine Tree Chief. Their maternal instincts and observations were honored and respected as the wampums stated that each leader must have skin seven layers thick — capable of withstanding the pressures of political strife for the good of the people. The environment and all its inhabitants were protected as well. Any child held the right to challenge a *sachem.* With three challenges a leader could be deposed or ousted.

The word *wampum* is Algonquin and denotes law, peace and sacredness as derived from its color white. Wampums are white cylindrical beads fashioned from clam shells. These were strung into sacks. Woven into them were pictographic images (contrasted by the use of beads from a purple shell) conceptualizing something sacred. The alliances, peace treaties, and special occasions were recorded in the wampums and held by the *sachems* as historical records of the works of the confederacy.

The Algonquian Confederacy lived by similar ways. Many of the concepts adopted by the Iroquois Confederacy had

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Writer and artist **Iron Thunderhorse** is author of *Return of the Thunder Beings,* Bear Press, and Co., Santa Fe, N.M.

been a long-standing tradition of their Algonquian neighbors.

Benjamin Franklin as well as several other noted pioneers studied the political workings of these confederacies and interacted with them on a regular basis. Franklin often wrote about the beauty of the Iroquoian council and the eloquence of its orators.

Iroquoian orators often used a bundle of arrows, tied together, to symbolize the strength of their alliance. The eagle, messenger of the Great Spirit, clutched this bundle in its talons. Separately, each arrow could be broken; bound together the arrows could not be broken. The United States of America later adopted this symbol as its own great seal.

The United States never adopted the indigenous form of democracy *in toto*, but many of the basic principles did find their way into American political forms. There are numerous differences between the original roots of democracy and our contemporary methods. The U.S. Congress requires a two-thirds majority to form a consensus whereas the First Nations never finalized a decision without unanimity. The rights of women, the elderly, the youth, the handicapped and the environment did not find their way into the Bill of Rights. Perhaps the time has come?

Other similarities do exist. For instance, the Great Council of the Iroquois Confederacy was divided into two sections called the Elder Brothers (Onondaga and Seneca) and the Younger Brothers (Mohawk and Cayuga) identical to the Senate and House of Representatives. The Keeper of the Sacred Fire carried an eagle-headed cane bearing the pictographic symbols of the 50 original *sachems* of the confederacy, who were similar to presidents.

During the bicentennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution, Congress passed S.B. 1746 acknowledging the Native American origins of democracy. It also honored the sovereignty of the tribal nations.

The Iroquois still maintain their traditional council. Their passports are honored in dozens of foreign countries. Federal law maintains that Native American Tribes are autonomous nations with their own customs and traditions. Most Americans would be surprised to know how many of these customs are already a way of life in the United States. TW

Challenging racism

In 1637, the Pequot Indians declared war on the English and lost, Massachusetts state legislator and church activist Byron Rushing reminded the Episcopal Urban Caucus during an address at the group's annual meeting in Buffalo, N.Y., last February. What we might not have been taught, he added, is that afterwards seventeen Indians were sold as slaves in the Caribbean and on the return trip, Captain Pierce brought enslaved Africans back to New England.

European couldn't have dominated and harvested the wealth of the "new" world without the use of slave labor.

Justifications for slavery in the 17th century weren't based on race, but on the conviction that it was appropriate that Christian slave owners dominate heathen slaves. Eventually, as slaves converted to Christianity, color became the attribute that marked the masters as superior.

"Racism demeans and destroys some people while it advantages others. But racism is an important part of our lives. It holds things together. It is useful to all of us," Rushing said.

For change, a paradigm shift is needed. "We need not to be identified by race ('free, white and 21') but by who we really are. 'White' only exists in contrast to 'black.'

"Being white is something you *can* give up. Our challenge to this church is to say that racism is not our nature. It may not seem that way because it is rare when it is not present, but it is not our nature."

As part of its anti-racism efforts the Caucus voted to create a reporting mechanism to alert members of instances of racism in the church.

Does C-14 have a future?

Participants at this year's annual gathering of the Coalition 14 clan of Episcopal dioceses have decided it's not time for the organization's funeral — not yet, anyway. Members will meet again next year to search for a common purpose.

Formed in 1971 to allocate base budget support to the then "missionary" dioceses of the church, the Coalition was known for developing innovative ways to do the church's mission and ministry in the small, and generally rural, member dioceses.

In 1990, dioceses with significant Native American ministries — most of them Coalition members — decided to receive their funding through the Episcopal Committee on Indian Ministry instead of C-14. That move reduced the Coalition's budget dramatically.

As new bishops started to replace some of the original Coalition bishops there was less consensus on ministry strategy. Last year one bishop noted that the group had ceased functioning as a coalition.

Membership had for several years been as high as 16 dioceses. Nine dioceses were present at this year's meeting: Idaho, E. Oregon, W. Kansas, Arizona, Nevada, N. Michigan, Rio Grande, Navajoland and Wyoming (the N. Dakota delegation was snowed in). Eau Claire and Utah have dropped out; Alaska and Montana may, too.

The group pioneered ways of bringing bishops, priests and lay people together to "make decisions corporately," Eastern Oregon's Rustin Kimsey said. "Twenty years ago, that was radical."

—Dick Snyder

Vital Signs

Watching behind the curtain
— graceful volunteerism

by Penelope Duckworth

"Grace is the law of the descending movement." — *Simone Weil*

Grace was there before I was born. I never knew a time when she wasn't there. Mother said she'd shown up on the front porch years back with her suitcase in hand and said, "Mrs. Duckworth, I have no place to go." She was a distant relative of Grandma's, a third or fourth cousin from a family that had found its way to the wrong side of the tracks. She had married and one or the other had abandoned the effort. So she stood on the wooden porch on that respectable main street dotted with hydrangea and Grandma took her in "for a while, until she got on her feet." They paid her for housekeeping and gave her the large room at the top of the stairs.

She stayed on, becoming as much a part of my grandparents' house as the dark entryway, the oak hall-tree that held Grandpa's outerwear for both farm and town, and the heavy, dark, wine-red curtains that separated the two main downstairs rooms.

She was always old. Her hair was a rag of grey wrapped around her skull. Her skin was translucent with a bluish cast and her pale eyes were wide and almost wild. Her mouth was a wound with a few long teeth. She wore Grandma's cast-off dresses and shoes; she weighed about 95 pounds to Grandma's 230 pounds. Her voice was a shrill whinny that accosted the room. I remember her hands, knotted and thick-veined, peeling apples or onions while she murmured; reliving the last row with her husband or someone else who had been harsh.

She was always there, a fixture of our childhood; a nervous wisp of a person in old cotton dresses, thick hose to her knees and the black high-laced shoes of the elderly.

Her room was the one room in the house off-limits for us as children. When we caught a glimpse inside, it was clean and orderly; looking quite different from its mysterious and dilapidated inhabitant.

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For several years Grandma and Grandpa had the only television in the family and we kids would go over and watch afternoon shows there. Grace would watch, too, never sitting down but standing on the edge of the room, either half in the kitchen or part way behind the velvet curtains. She would titter nervously at the westerns as the excitement began to build and if we evinced any fear, she would anxiously chide us with the words, "It ain't real; it's only play-actin'." And if someone died, she'd rush to explain, "He ain't really dead." She'd hurry to comfort us often at the expense of the emotions we were enjoying.

I don't remember ever seeing her sit down. She stood, usually with her bony back to us, to eat the little that she did, and usually hovered just outside the particular room where anything was taking place. Grandma and Grandpa cared for a number of strays, mostly cats. Like them, Grace was fond of cats and would carry and stroke whatever housecats or strays happened to be about. She would lean over them when they ate, muttering encouragement and offering saucers of milk.

Mother said that occasionally something — a burned pot or sliced finger — would prompt her to expletives. And when so prompted she would let fly language to "make a sailor blush," my mother (an

credit: Dierdre Luzwick

Penelope Duckworth is Episcopal chaplain at Stanford University. Artist **Dierdre Luzwick** lives in Cambridge, Wis. This illustration is cropped from a larger image.

army wife) recounted.

Grandpa was superintendent of schools, a mathematician and a scholar. He was not the sort to hold us on his lap and tell stories or sing songs. Rather, he would write to us quoting Thucydides or Thomas Gray and urging us toward rectitude. His thoughts were not only erudite but his voice stentorian. Grandpa would urge Grace toward the higher life from the living room chair while Grace would snipe back from the edge of the kitchen. These dialogues went on year after year. There never seemed to be any question, as the years rolled on, of Grace being fired or even asked to look for other work. She seemed to sense her security and was comfortably spiteful.

Grace was such a part of my grandparents household that it took the visit of a friend to give me some perspective. When I was in college, I took a friend there and watched her eyes widen as she first viewed Grace stooped and cackling behind the curtains. With the words, "Oh, that's just Grace," I dismissed her anxiety, but my friend's questions later gave me pause and helped me realize that the situation was unusual. I think it may have been during that visit when, sleeping upstairs, I waked in the middle of the night and glimpsed Grace heading for the bathroom, her night dress held high revealing two emaciated legs knobby and flaccid in the moonlight. Her hair was down past her waist and fell pale and mousy against her white gown.

It was hard to imagine people who are already old getting older. But Grace did and we did, too. Soon the small Ohio town had changed and gone the way of many small mid-western towns. Businesses had moved out, family farms were folding; the town was dwindling, even dying. A slower way of life with a particular graciousness was almost gone. There weren't many newcomers and there weren't many strays.

One day Mother phoned and said that Grace was ill. They thought it was hardening of the arteries. Grandma said Grace would sit at the head of the stairs and "keen" or wail her pain in the midnight hours. It was eerie and lonely and sad. Finally, Grace began to hemorrhage and was taken to the local hospital. She was there for several months and Grandpa went to visit every day. He wasn't with Grace when she died but told her at each visit that her room was waiting and that they missed her.

Later they cleaned out her room and free access to it still surprises me when I reach the head of the stairs. They found she'd saved almost all of her earnings over the years. They also found she had one living nephew out in California. He was vice-president of one of the major banks and they sent him her savings. He wrote a courteous note of thanks.

Grandpa said that her last words to him were words that had been repeated many times those last days. She kept asking, "Mr. Duckworth, when will you take me home?"

And his response was always the same. "Grace, just as soon as the doctor says you're well enough, I promise I'll take you home."

And he would have. TW

Hong Kong's struggle

China, which will resume sovereignty in Hong Kong in 1997, is afraid of democracy, but the people of Hong Kong have asked for it in a series of demonstrations, mass rallies, signature campaigns, and hunger strikes.

Until very recently, Britain has actually obstructed the prospects for democracy, bowing to pressure from China. Too often the church has done the same.

In 1989, I was demoted from an Episcopal priest-in-charge to curate at another church, because I had acted as the figure-head of a territory-wide campaign to shelve the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant in China, 30 miles away from Hong Kong. Chinese officials regard anti-nukes as anti-China. They regard the democracy movement, in which I have been active, in the same way.

In 1991, I was directly elected as a legislator. The bishop suspended me from my parish work except for services on Sunday mornings. I receive no pay but retain the right to resume duties when my four-year term is over. The bishop has not promised to continue this arrangement if I seek re-election in 1995.

Ironically, as the society at large has become more aggressive in bidding for democracy, the Anglican Diocese (composed of 30 parishes) has become more conservative. Anglican leaders in Hong Kong have a liberal perspective theologically, but not politically. They are timid and afraid to antagonize China.

The Roman Catholic Church (five percent of the population) is comparatively outspoken, and some priests dare to support democracy openly. Protestants here (another five percent of the population) are mainly conservative evangelicals.

Right after the June 4th, 1989 Beijing Massacre, all sectors demanded more democracy. Even the conservative members of the Legislative Council recommended that half of the legislature be directly elected in 1995. But British officials aquiesced when China demanded that the reform be limited to one-third.

At present the Hong Kong legislature has 60 members. Only 18 are directly elected by Hong Kong's six million people. Functional constituencies — 100,000 professional people such as company directors, lawyers, and teachers — control another 21 seats. The governor, who is British, controls the remaining 21.

— Fung Chi-Wood

Council terms, jail terms

by Marianne Arbogast

Ardeth Platte knows what it's like to serve with Caesar and to oppose him. A 56-year-old Sister of St. Dominic, she has served terms in government office and in prison.

In 1966 Platte became the administrator of St. Joseph's High School in Saginaw, a city of 100,000 on Lake Huron, at the base of Michigan's thumb. St. Joseph's, in the heart of Saginaw's black and Hispanic east side, was being converted into an educational center for the many neighborhood residents who had dropped out or been expelled from school.

Contact with these students and their families radicalized Platte.

"I learned first-hand what oppression is," Platte says. "I experienced the grave injustice and racism that was programmed into the Saginaw area, from city government employment to every service rendered — public safety, sanitation, neighborhood care. Redlining in lending institutions was perpetuated through government.

"I understood the subjugation and dehumanization of people not only from a personal perspective but through the systems and structures within the community."

The city was run by a tightly knit group of business, industrial and financial leaders, who ran and financed city council candidates under the banner of the "United Saginaw Citizens." Grassroots challengers, anything but united, were virtually shut out. Minority representatives were rare, and only one woman had ever served on the council.

"By keeping people separate from each other and out of the system, the whole community was being injured," Platte says.

She began to work with others seeking change.

Platte was persuaded to run for city council in 1973. She won a seat, and served as a city councilwoman for the next 12 years.

At her first council meeting, she convinced the council to adopt a resolution mandating inclusive language in council documents.

She spearheaded affirmative action hiring in the police force and fire departments and helped develop a fair housing ordinance which included sexual orientation — extraordinary at the time.

She helped expose redlining and the city's intentional neglect of whole neighborhoods.

Platte won widespread community support and in 1983 was asked to run for mayor — a position elected by council members from their ranks. She declined.

"I knew my concern for justice policies was so strong that I could never represent the [council] body in the public forum," she explains. "For example, two of us developed an ordinance challenging the investments of the city, and our inclusion in apartheid in South Africa. By the time it passed it had become weaker. As mayor I would have had to sign that, and teach and uphold it. I felt it was better to remain a conscience for the council and a voice for the disadvantaged, rather than be a voice on behalf of policies not fully responsive to the poor."

Instead, Platte became mayor pro-tem, a role that expanded her influence and visibility while allowing her to maintain

"We faith-filled people are going to have to implement the Gospel in our lives. The values we hold, the feminist values — empowerment, inclusion, mutuality, consensus, stewardship — are really important."

Ardeth Platte credit: Marietta Jaeger

The Witness

Marianne Arbogast is an assistant editor of *The Witness*. Photographer Marietta Jaeger is promotion manager of *The Witness*.

an independent voice.

With local religious leaders, she developed Advocacy for Justice, which combined service programs with organizing around welfare rights, criminal justice, Central American issues, and the nuclear arms race.

For Platte, the global picture came into clearer and clearer focus.

"I realized how block grants for neighborhoods were shortchanged, but the federal government always had enough for the arms race," she says.

When nuclear weapons came to Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda, Mich. in 1983, Platte led others in an ongoing campaign of prayer and civil disobedience, landing in jail repeatedly for trespass and her refusal to give up her witness.

In 1985, Platte decided not to run for another council term. With Carol Gilbert, a co-worker and fellow Dominican, she poured her energy into organizing a resistance network in the state.

In 1990, they moved to Oscoda, seeking to ground their protest in a commitment to the local community.

"Carol and I are both committed to doing nonviolent civil resistance to the arms race for the long haul," she says. "We are very conscious at this time, that the 20-year strategic plan is to continue to escalate qualitatively weapons systems of mass destruction. The projected budget for the next decade is $350 billion on nuclear weapons alone. We know that the strategic plan is to continue expanding U.S. domination over third-world resources and to intervene in every way possible to keep control.

On the local level, government is simpler, but the higher it gets, the more I question whether it is possible to make change.

"We are very much dedicated to witnessing some truth to a country that doesn't like to have all the information explicitly known."

Asked if working within the government could accomplish the changes she desires, Platte said that's no longer an option for her because of the Roman Catholic Church's prohibition against religious holding government positions.

But she also sees limits, at least in the U.S., to Christian participation in government.

"I look at government as being the wrong structure," she says. "On local levels it's simpler, but the higher it gets politically, the more I question whether it is possible to make change.

"We faith-filled people are going to have to implement the Gospel in our lives. We're the ones who need to simplify our lifestyle and embrace downward mobility. We need to implement alternatives, a new approach to conflict. Some of this has to begin to be implemented in the cities, right within our own communities, to begin showing national leaders what has to be done. The values we hold as faith-filled people, the feminist values — empowerment, inclusion, mutuality, consensus, stewardship — are really important when working with those who are oppressed." TW

William Blake, *Circle of the Lustful*, illus. for Dante's *Inferno*, 1824-27

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