The Witness

Volume 77 • Number 6 • June 1994

Disabilities

letters

YOUR INTERVIEW WITH Bishop Steve Charleston orchestrates so much hope in these trying times. However, I too find hope living in this age where the Christian faith is rising from within our ranks, rather than a top down movement. Until our community reaches out arm by arm to take in the whole world we cannot and will not be whole. Touching the lives of both our immediate community sitting next to us in the pew and our neighbor half-way around the world who doesn't even speak our language is the grassroots kind of healing I dream will one day be real.

Steve's interview touches on this same kind of dream where oppression will cease to exist. The flexibility of Christ continuing to take us in again and again is what pumps life into my faith. Passionate listening, respect and tolerance for ideas different from our own makes this kind of global vision possible for me from my own space on that globe.

Thank you for bringing so much hope and vision in your interview! Your magazine continues to be a catalyst for change and hope!

Sally Swart
Birmingham, MI

ADRIENNE AND I WANT TO THANK you for the extremely thoughtful article on Common Ground written by Marianne Arbogast. We also want to congratulate you on the entire April issue which is just excellent. It was so nice to see our work placed in a larger context and such a thought-provoking discussion.

Mary Jacksteit, Director
Common Ground Network for
Life and Choice
Washington, DC

THE COVER FOR THE LAST ISSUE of *The Witness* reminded me of a poem my nephew Vincent Mellado wrote some time ago. I thought you'd enjoy it.

Let's Talk
What do you think about;
birth control, abortion, gun control,
equal rights, euthanasia?
Can we talk about;
when life begins, the right to life,
the quality of life?
NO!
Don't push your morals on me!
Don't stand there and preach ...
Argue
about what you think is right.
I've made up my own mind.
I will make my own choices.
argue — to apply reason (to a problem), to maintain (an opinion),
to persuade by talk, to be a sign of, to prove, to dispute.
The word violence is not in the definition.
Okay;
somebody shoots your wife for her wedding ring,
your daughter comes home from school pregnant,
your neighbor's skull is bashed in because of his skin,
the plug is pulled,
and your dog is set on fire.
Let's choose:
and scream for capital punishment,
burn a cross
or better yet a hospital.
Find a doctor to scrape us into shape
then sue him just for the hell of it.
Hey,
he screwed up not me.
Let's accept that which separates us from animals,
our ability to reason,
and continue to mutilate each other.
Let's accept the imperfection of our humanness
and continue to use it as an excuse to
kill each other.
Why don't we just blame God?
Then,
maybe we can talk.
No, better yet.
Let's argue.

Keep up the good work.

Trinidad Sanchez, Jr.
San Antonio, TX

CONGRATULATIONS on the April issue, on dialogue. "Fidelity" [alias Episcopalians United/Canada] has sprung up and this issue will be of particular assistance in that dialogue with them. I appreciate the reprint permission and will send you copies of anything that ends up being printed in *Integrator*.

The theme of "Embracing our shadows" is one that I want to grab hold of with both hands and so I am especially grateful for assistance with the cost of the *Witness*/Trinity video.

Chris Ambidge
Toronto, Ontario

YOU ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED for the magazine's EXCELLENCE! I continually find the articles not only timely — but gripping to read — and useful on many levels. THANK YOU!

Fara Impastato, O.P.
New Orleans, LA

I HAVE JUST DISCOVERED *The Witness*! It's great!

Mary Matthews
Amherst, MA

RECEIVE A WARM EMBRACE from a sister who welcomes each new magazine eagerly as it enters my post-box here in Matagalpa, Nicaragua!

Though sometimes my issues lag behind (i.e. Christmas arrived for the beginning of Lent) I still am *so* happy to catch up on the richness of all your contributors.

As we work here in Nicaragua to find nonviolent approaches to resolving conflict and to responding to the unjust economic situation resulting in part from the U.S.-backed "low intensity" war, I was especially touched by the Dec. article "Holding to the light: Detroiters resist violence" and the continuing work of SOSAD. Movements like this and Detroit Summer are a source of inspiration for us here in Central America.

Warmest Spring/Resurrection greetings to all your readers!

Kitty Madden
Casa Materna
Matagalpa, Nicaragua

DEATH ROW CAN BE a very dark and lonely place. As a condemned man you have been told by society that you are not worthy of life itself. You are deemed too dangerous to be put with the general prison population and are isolated from all other prisoners by being housed in a special unit called death row. And finally this isolation goes further, for many condemned men eventually lose contact and are abandoned by their own families.

How do I know this? Because I'm a condemned man on Connecticut's death row. But I'm one of the lucky ones. I still have contact with some of my family, and I have several pen pals. However, I'm the exception, not the rule. I personally know people who receive no letters and no visits. Many other condemned men are in the same situation.

In prison, letters can bring a ray of light to the darkness of death row isolation. For those on the outside, learning to know just one prisoner can dispel some of the myths, misconceptions and fears about prisons and those locked away there. That's why the Death Row Support Project was started.

Jesus' call for us to visit those in prison is clear. Perhaps correspondence can be your way of visiting. For the name and address of a condemned man, please write to: Rachel Gross, Church of the Brethren Death Row Support Project, P.O. Box 600, Liberty Mills, Ind., 46946. Tell her that Michael Ross sent you.

As a condemned man myself, I thank you. And once you get involved with the Death Row Support Project, I believe that you will thank yourself.

Michael Ross #127404
Death Row — Somers Prison
P.O. Box #100; Somers, CT 06071

Fundraising for *The Witness*

Every reader should receive a letter this month from the *Friends of The Witness* asking for financial contributions to the magazine. The fundraising effort is necessary, but we do restrict it to a once- a-year appeal. We will not hit you with emergency appeals throughout the year. Part of the reason the *Friends of The Witness* can afford to be civil in its request for help is that former editor Bill Spofford left the magazine with an endowment which continues to support our efforts. (Subscription revenue covers only one-sixth of the cost of publishing the magazine.) But that endowment is eroding. Without additional support from readers, the magazine will be on a precarious footing at best.

For those of you who can consider including *The Witness* in your will, our treasurer Bob Eckersley will be happy to work with you. Eckersley has been connected to the magazine since its resurrection in 1975 and was a friend of Bill Spofford's. He's a CPA who travels in corridors of influence but has a quirky interest in socialist thinking and justice issues. He's easy to talk to, has a good sense of humor, is rarely politically correct and is an amateur star gazer. Getting to know Bob Eckersley is reason enough to call. He can be reached at (717) 346-8425.

Classifieds

Positions available

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, New Jersey Council of Churches. A person of vision, lay or clergy, a proven manager/administrator with strong interpersonal and process skills, capable of dealing with theological, social justice, and public policy issues. Equal opportunity employer. Send resume by July 31 to Frank Gibbs, Chair, Search Committee, 24 Morgan Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054-3322.

THE OTHER SIDE, a Christian magazine of peace and justice issues, seeks a full-time assistant publisher to conduct financial management and planning, plus provide support services. Experience in magazine publishing and-or financial management desirable. Excellent benefits. Deadline for application: May 15, later inquiries appropriate. Contact Hiring Team, *The Other Side*, 300 W. Apsley Street, Philadelphia, PA 19144 (215-849-2178).

Classifieds

WITNESS CLASSIFIEDS cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. For instance, items received January 15 will run in March.

When ads mark anniversaries of deaths, ordinations, or acts of conscience, photos — even at half column-width — can be included.

Ad opportunity!

COPIES of the August/September issue which will be distributed to everyone at General Convention and Triennial gathering of Episcopal Church Women will contain a Convention supplement including advertisements. Ads will cost $400 for a whole page; $200 for a half page; $100 for a quarter page; and $50 for an eighth. Classifieds will run as usual, but for longer ads buying by the page is actually cheaper.

Ads must be received and paid for by June 15. Send them to the attention of Marianne Arbogast.

THE WITNESS
Since 1917

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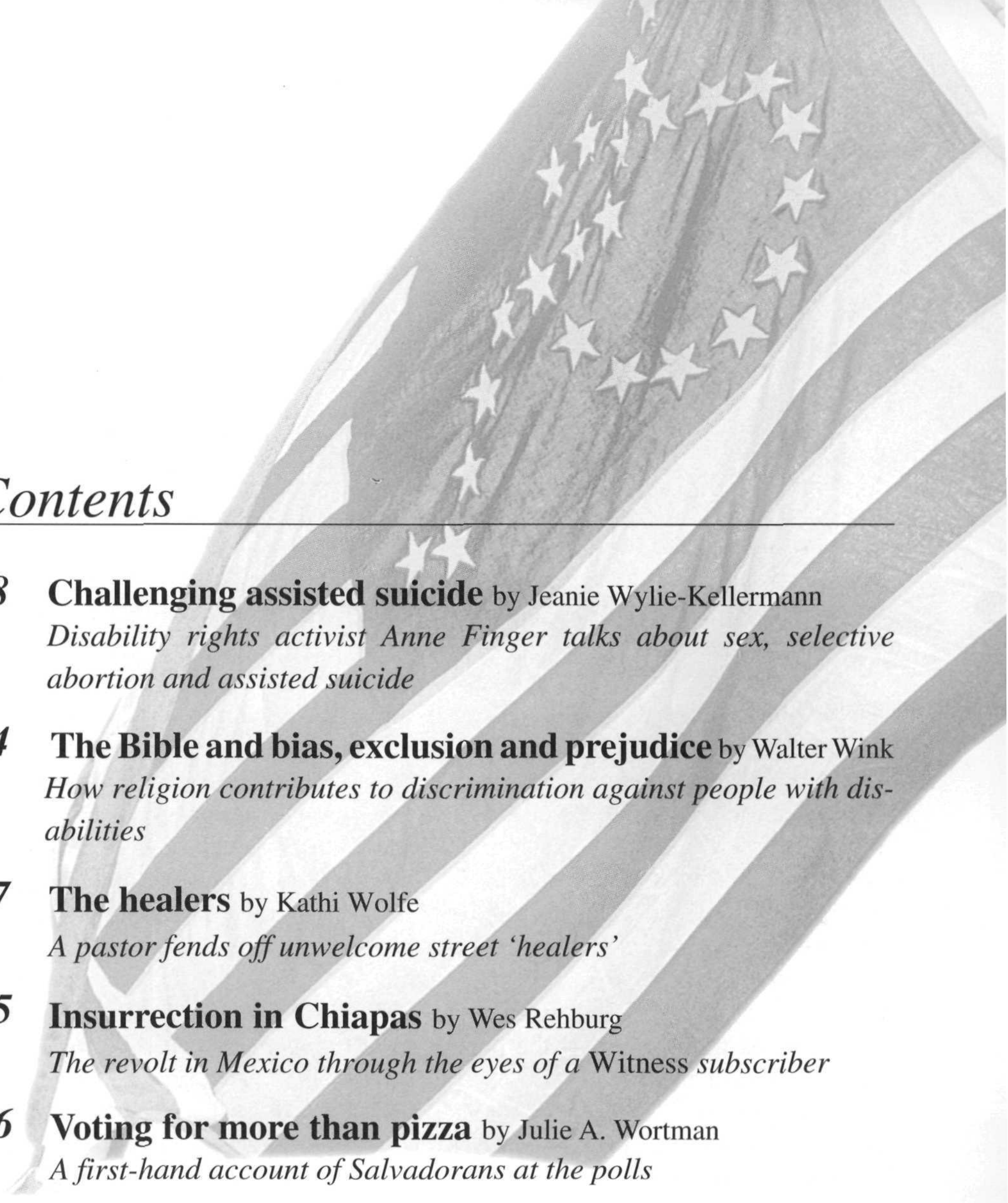

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Cover: ADAPT(Americans Disabled for Attendant Care Today) members demonstrate outside the U.S. Capitol, 5/93, Harvey Finkle, Impact Visuals.
Back cover: Nelson Mandela *by Helen David Brancato*

Rejecting "normalcy"

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

In preparing this issue I have been struck by how many people have taken time to remind me that the Nazi holocaust began with the mentally ill and physically disabled.

The level of threat that people with disabilities in this culture are feeling is extremely high.

No doubt this stems in part from the arrogance that allowed a Columbia Presbyterian Hospital geneticist to tell my journalism class in 1980 that "any woman who brings a handicapped child into the world today should bear full financial responsibility because it never had to have happened." He was a proponent of the prenatal screening that could anticipate, at that time, 60 different conditions, although the remedy in all but a handful was abortion.

Fortunately for our appreciation of the power and multiplicity of God, birth is as untameable as the weather — the prenatal tests are not all-inclusive, they are not exact, some people forego them and not all disabilities are present at birth. People with disabilities persist.

It is a gift to meet people associated with the disability rights movement, people who are neither sentimental nor long-suffering about their disabilities. They'll say it stinks — but they're quick to add that the attitude of the culture is far worse than the disability. I'm thankful for the people who produce *The Disability Rag* and for members of ADAPT, who are militant about access to public transit and the need for attendant care as an alternative to nursing home residency.

Fortunately for our appreciation of the power and multiplicity of God, birth is as untameable as the weather.

The church is not an easy sanctuary for many of those with whom we spoke while preparing this issue. Apparently it is commonplace for people with disabilities to find themselves surrounded on the street by strangers who, in the name of Christ, chant and pray and then condemn them.

Of course, we are too sensitive to inflict unrequested healing ceremonies on people, but we do attend churches which, at best, break out the champagne for installing a ramp — never acknowledging that since passage of the American Disabilities Act in 1990 most public and private institutions are *required* to be accessible. In fact, the church (as separated from the state) is lagging far behind.

Preparing this issue was an education. In searching for art, I learned that classical artists rarely made portraits of people with disabilities. They just don't appear in the visual historical record. Likewise, classical poets, who struggle eloquently with lost love and death, have little to say about living passionately with disabilities.

Cultural malevolence toward people with disabilities, it seems to me, is rooted in two things: first, a terror that everything may not be perfect and, second, a misplaced conviction that whatever doesn't fit the norm needs to be beaten, cajoled or prayed into the confines of normalcy.

Martin Luther, when asked what to do with a disabled infant, responded, "Beat the devil out of it."

But Stephen Levine, a Buddhist counselor for the dying, says that everything depends on treating one's self with tenderness and mercy. And since some of his patients who found a strong heart connection died, while others who remained closed off lived, he has concluded that healing has nothing to do with whether one lives or dies. Presumably, healing also has nothing to do with whether or not one's disabilities melt away.

"If our habitual conditioning is to overcome our pain, we will have a tendency to feel overwhelmed when things don't go the way we wish," Levine writes in *Healing into Life and Death* (Anchor Books, 1987). "We may even feel a need to 'beat' another's pain. We will find it difficult to connect with them just where they are. We won't be able to touch them with love because if we want anything from somebody, even for them to be out of pain, they will be an object in our mind rather than the subject of our heart. If we can open our own pain and explore resistances and long-held aversions, there arises the possibility of touching another's pain with compassion, of meeting another as we meet ourselves with a bit more clarity and tenderness. We see in such instances how the work we do on ourselves is clearly of benefit to all sentient beings."

editor's note

The healing of community is to know that this is true, to lay down the suspicion that disabilities stem from sin, to lay down the presumption that we can navigate as demigods if we create a society of exclusion, to know our own hearts and to see God's work in all ways of being. TW

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

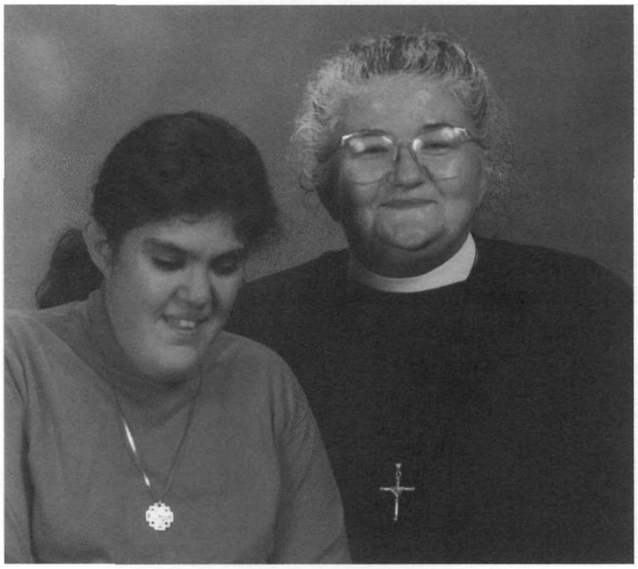
Loving Maggie

by Linda Strohmier

Maggie, my daughter, was born the day she was due — Labor Day, 1970 — in a textbook delivery. Everything seemed fine, until three days later, when she was drowning from double pneumonia in the hospital nursery. No one knew why. Then they began to discover "anomalies" — birth defects. Neo-natal ICUs had not come to rural New England, so the hospital put her in a private room, expecting her to die. Her father and I, dazed and devastated, planned a funeral.

She didn't die, but that began a hellish first year: blind for a week, before and after a neurosurgery to install a shunt from brain to belly to relieve a developing hydrocephalus; then two more hospitalizations for pneumonia. We were frantic, sleep-deprived zombies. At eight months our pediatrician assessed her brain damage and announced that she'd never walk or talk or feed herself. He suggested that we prepare to institutionalize her at about age three. He murmured with gentle pity: what a shame ... such a tragedy ... such bright, talented people ...

Then *we* began to drown — in depression. I got quietly, desperately suicidal. One leaden, despairing, 4 a.m., as I sat up with this frantic baby who never slept, the Byrds' version of Pete Seeger's "Turn, turn, turn" kept running through my head. I dug up a Bible, determined to find the source of the lyrics. When I finally found it, I read Ecclesiastes through to the end, then began again and read it start to finish. It freed me from the hideous, gnawing worm in the belly of my depression: the certainty that Maggie's afflictions must be God smiting *me* — for what? For existing? In any case, Ecclesiastes began my climb out of despair.


Maggie and Linda Strohmier

Maggie is 23 now. She has weathered a lot: hernia surgery at two; a spinal fusion, with a body cast from armpits to knees for eight months, at age six; four months of hospitals and surgeries to rebuild both clubfeet at 16. After years of well-meaning but soul-crushing local school programs, at 10 she entered a residential school run by the Camphill community and bloomed. She now lives in a Camphill-related life-sharing community in Massachusetts. Her father and I wanted for her to have as much independence as she could, and she has flourished beyond our wildest hopes in those early dark years.

Not merely does she walk, talk, and feed herself. At 15, she learned to read, and keeps her household up-to-date on events from *Newsweek* and *People*. Her brain-damage is still considerable, so she can't write. Math is beyond her. She is, however, an articulate and perceptive conversationalist. She works five days a week in a recycling center and empties her busy house's dishwasher and wastebaskets daily. Her bubbling laugh and infectious smile light up every room she enters. She prays with fervor at the Prayers of the People — and has single-handedly loosened up every congregation I've worked in to do the same!

Because Maggie was born before ultrasound and amniocentesis, we were spared the awful dilemma of whether to abort a "flawed fetus." I'm grateful. I would have chosen wrong. Before Maggie, I thought being loved was contingent upon what I *did*. But I discovered that I loved Maggie fiercely, helplessly, not because of anything she could *do*, but simply because she *was*, and *is*. And even when I'm a rotten mother, she loves me too. From her I know, viscerally, the unconditional love of God.

Through Maggie, I have spent a good deal of time in these years with handicapped children and adults. At Maundy Thursday foot-washings I am reminded how blessed I have been to be among "Maggie's people" — to wipe noses, mouths, hands, bottoms and tears. The Camphill community believe that God has blessed the world with handicapped people so that we all might learn what it means to be truly, fully human — to wash one another's feet, to bear one another's burdens, to love one another. Maggie has grown into a woman of simple and profound faith. By her very being, she is a witness of the power of God to heal and to love. TW

Linda Strohmeir, a member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company board, is canon pastor at the St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle.

Reserved for the Handicapped

by Nancy G. Westerfield

Painted into the pavement, the familiar logo
Of a blue-and-white wheelchair protects
Ease of access to the library for the disabled:
Their own diagonal parking-stall nearest
Self-opening doors. Protected against disabling
Cars by the library's steel bookdrop, a stub
Of tree of heaven recurs here year after year,
Where the self-opening force of a seed
Fractured the cement like sod. Never to be
A dancing girl of a tree like the new maple
Plantings in the library lawn, flirting a swirl
Of bright leaves, never to grow tall, upright,
Straight-limbed, in winter it drowns in snow
Banked by the bookdrop, in summer thirsts
Through baked concrete, thrusting a stunted
Diagonal that survives, sundances, flaunts
Green, transcends its merely being trapped
In a space reserved for the handicapped.

Nancy Westerfield is a pastoral minister at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Kearney, Neb. Westerfield, who lives with clinical depression, has been a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship recipient. Her husband uses a wheelchair.

Poetry

Challenging assisted suicide: an interview with Anne Finger

Anne Finger is a lecturer in creative writing at Wayne State University. She's the author of Past Due: A Story of Disability, *has a novel slated for publication this fall and is poetry editor of* The Disability Rag. *She is co-editing a book on reproductive rights, sexual rights and disability. Her son Max is eight years old.*

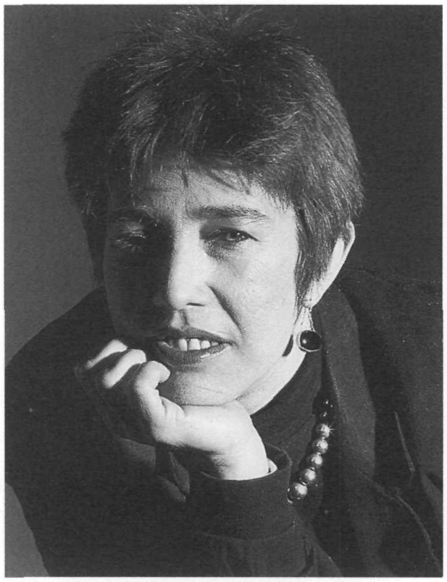
Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann: Tell me about you — your work, your involvement in the disability community.

Anne Finger: My involvement with disability started when I became disabled, which was when I was not quite three years old, in 1954. I had polio. I was one of the last of my tribe.

For a number of different reasons people with polio were much more integrated into the mainstream than people with other disabilities. A lot of that was because of Roosevelt. There was this public image of polio as a disability that wasn't totally debilitating. I think another factor is that polio's a disease of good sanitation — in third-world countries, they always say "the polio epidemic will break out when you put sewers in."

The polio virus is endemic and people get immunities to it in their mothers' breast milk or through exposure to it in low levels when there's poor sanitation. Once there is good sanitation, they don't have the immunity to it and epidemics break out. Because of that, polio has tended to be a more middle-class disease.

In many ways integration was advantageous to me, but in other ways it wasn't. I didn't grow up knowing other disabled people. And, in fact, I absorbed a lot of the culture's disdain for disabled people — that's a very *big* thing for a lot of disabled people, especially of my generation. Many of us have been raised to not identify — it's a form of internalized oppression. "I am different than them; they are like this and I am not like that." You know, "I'm not whiny, I'm not dependent ..."



Anne Finger

J.W-K.: Because you were mainstreamed you had less identification or less experience with the disabled community. How did that change for you?

A.F.: It really changed for me out of the women's movement. Psychologically and intellectually, my experience as a woman and a feminist brought me into the disability rights movement. It was the early 1980s before I had another friend who was disabled.

J.W-K.: Was that a major shift in your psyche?

A.F.: Was it a major leap? It sure was. When I was 29 or 30, I went to a conference for people who have polio. I felt what it would be like to grow up Jewish, never knowing another Jewish person, and suddenly meet a roomful of Jewish people. Suddenly, I had this enormous cultural, emotional rapport with these people. It was a very eye-opening experience for me to see how much I had been formed by my disability. But it was also very frightening.

Judy Heuman, who is very important in the disability rights movement, was there. She's in an electric wheelchair and there were these plastic chairs in the way. She just plowed through them. It was this moment of seeing this liberatory possibility — if something's in the way, you just get rid of it, even if it's in a socially inappropriate way. It seemed simultaneously wonderful and really shocking to me.

J.W-K.: Was it another step then from meeting with these people to stepping into disability rights?

A.F.: Not really, I think just because I had such a political frame of mind, the two things were pretty much in sync.

J.W-K.: Can you give an overview of what the politically active disability community is like?

A.F.: I would say a couple of things. I think the disability rights movement grew out of the social tumult of the 1960s, but it developed later, in the early 1970s. It was beginning in a period of reaction and so the disability rights movement has tended to be less activist in its orientation. People focus on legislative change or using the judiciary. It's also a physical fact that in order for disabled people to achieve grassroots change, there needed to be a basic level of accommodation and access that didn't exist.

In the last 10 years, a group called

Artist **Frida Kahlo**, who used a wheelchair, produced colorful, vivid paintings which rivalled the work of her husband Diego Rivera.

ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit) was formed to get access to public transit. They've now changed their name since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to Americans Disabled for Attendant Programs Today. They're a group that has very radical tactics. They have done a lot of organizing against the American Public Transit Association which opposed mainline accessible public transit.

I think they've been a little too trusting that passage of the ADA means transit is going to become accessible. But I think ADAPT is exciting because they *do* have a grassroots orientation and they draw from a broad spectrum of the disabled community. Since the ADA passed, they began to work around issues of attendant care, to give people alternatives to nursing homes, so people could stay in their homes with attendant care.

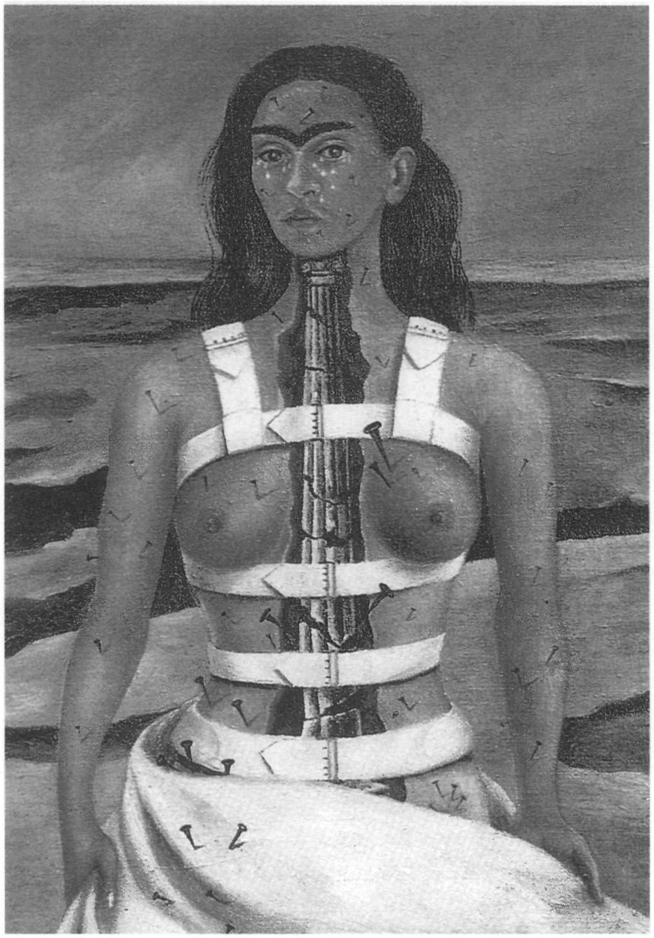
J.W-K.: Do African Americans, Vietnam vets, and people who are raised in poverty have a higher instance of being disabled?

A.F.: Most disabled people are poor. I'm sure you're more likely to be disabled if you're raised in poverty, but half of all disabled people are poor and that's also a consequence of disability.

J.W-K.: Do the Vietnam vets fit into the community? Are they vocal?

A.F.: I would say less so. There are issues about masculinity. A lot of men want to see themselves as active, masculine.

I didn't grow up knowing other disabled people. And, in fact, I absorbed a lot of the culture's disdain for disabled people.



***Broken Column*, 1944, by Frida Kahlo** Dolores Olmeda Found., Mexico

J.W-K.: I want to ask you about Christian healing and disabilities, but I want to start by asking you what kind of spirituality you have.

A.F.: I was raised as an atheist. I have always been disdainful of spirituality, but in the last couple months, I've started going to the Zen Center. I'm still an atheist — I'm clinging to my atheistic life — but I really like what Zen is. I like the Zen emphasis on slowness; as a disabled person it's really nice. And I like the meditation. I like the chanting. What I like about religion is the communal aspect of it. I mean, the only time I would go to church would be if there's a piano. I like it when people sing together.

J.W-K.: Your walls are covered with evocative spiritual art.

A.F.: But I feel free to put those up because I'm an atheist. It's all ironic.

J.W-K.: Your art is speaking of some truth beyond what we see.

A.F.: Right, I guess.

J.W-K.: Well, tell me about Christians and healing.

A.F.: It's something you get a lot of if you're a disabled person and it's often very intrusive. People will stop you on the street and suggest a healer that you can go to or tell you that they're going to pray for you or tell you you could be cured if you would believe.

J.W-K.: That's really appalling. I know that people do healing shows on stage in front of huge audiences, but it's a surprise to me that people accost people that they don't know on the street .

A.F.: There's a real sense when you're disabled that people have a right to intrude into your personal privacy. People will stop me on the street and ask me what my disability is, give me advice. People are generally, if anything, too friendly. I think it's an expression of people's discomfort. They'll say, "Hi! How are you?" with this scared look in their eyes. You get a lot of superficial pleasantry that masks a lot of fear and discomfort, so there's a constant double message that you're getting from the world. It can make you nuts real fast.

J.W-K.: And from complete strangers.

A.F.: When I was in Greece sitting in a village square waiting for my partner and son, a priest came up to me and put his hands on my head and prayed over me. I don't speak Greek — I couldn't say "leave me alone." Then he touched my legs. It took about five or ten minutes.

J.W-K.: What did you do?

A.F.: I just sat there. I said, "This is going to happen. There's nothing I can do about this." I also felt that this person means well and I had a sense that I was a North American in their culture. I just sat there.

I was in London last summer and met disabled people who had organized against one of these faith healing frenzies. People were demonstrating outside and a few people had gone inside. One woman who has MS told me she was standing inside and people were rocking back and forth and pointing their fingers at her. She couldn't figure out what was going on at first and then she realized that they were saying this thing about casting the devil out of her.

In faith healing gatherings people walk across the stage in great pain. People will fake ability, or convince themselves that they're not disabled anymore. There was a case in England with a woman with epilepsy who had been faith-healed who drowned in her bath having a seizure.

J.W-K.: Tell me your feelings about assisted suicide.

A.F.: I'm really concerned about assisted suicide. I'm concerned that in some ways the women's movement, the abortion rights movement, has talked about choice and control in ways that are very naive and have led us into a dangerous alliance with the assisted suicide movement.

J.W-K.: What is your position in relation to abortion in general?

A.F.: I'm an abortion rights activist. I've worked in an abortion clinic and I've been active in the reproductive rights movement for a long time. But I think radicals within the movement have always seen that abortion happens in a social context. We understand that the notion of choice is politically dangerous.

We *don't* make free choices in this society. Our choices are always tremendously impinged by economics, gender, disability.

We have to fight for the legal right to abortion; we also have to be dealing with a whole range of issues. The "It's a private decision between a woman and her doctor" makes us very atomized individuals. Not to mention that it assumes that every woman has a doctor, which is a profoundly classist assumption. And do doctors have our best interests at heart?

I'm really concerned about assisted suicide. I'm concerned that in some ways the women's movement, the abortion rights movement, has talked about choice and control in ways that are very naive and have led us into a dangerous alliance with the assisted suicide movement.

I think a lot of the rhetoric that some people in the abortion rights movement really believe, and others have adopted as an easy shorthand, has led us into a dangerous alliance with the assisted suicide movement.

J.W-K.: I remember in your book *Past Due* that you talked about being in a room with feminists in New York who were talking about abortion and suddenly feeling, during their consideration of selective abortion, like you were invisible. Can you say a little bit about that?

A.F.: It's *the* issue that we struggle with now in feminism — how do we deal with our history as this white, middle-class, and at the beginning heterosexual, young movement? Our opening move was to create woman as a category, which was a really necessary step. We had to say, we *do* have a community of interest here. Women are oppressed, but it became a movement that excluded older women, disabled women, women of color, working-class women. Now we're dealing with the aftershocks from that.

How do we have a feminist movement that can really encompass enormous diversity and the fact that women's interests sometimes are in conflict?

In terms of abortion rights specifically, there's overwhelming social support for abortion when there's a "defective" fetus.

There was a made-for-TV movie about a woman in Arizona whose husband had been on a trip to Europe and had brought thalidomide back with him. She took thalidomide when she was pregnant and wasn't able to get an abortion in this country. The movie was made by people who saw this as a pro-choice statement.

I have a couple problems with that. First off, it stigmatizes disabled people in order to argue for abortion rights. Also as a feminist I want women to have access to abortion because it's what we need for our lives to control our destiny. Women who have abortions because of rape or incest or fetal "defect" are a tremendously small proportion of the number of women who have abortions. We're not really arguing honestly and broadly for abortion rights when we argue for these exceptional cases.

I think we need to be willing to put forward a more radical politic. Abortion isn't going to get rid of the problems of poverty or disability.

J.W-K.: Tell me about the relationship between this and assisted suicide.

A.F.: We have a society that fears disease, that fears dying, that acts as if the best thing to do with a painful situation is get to it as quickly as possible. If you're going to die, do it, get it over with.

So, even in cases where people are terminally ill, I really worry about pressure on people. A lot of the pain and difficulty that people dying of cancer experience is an outgrowth of medical interference. If treatment options are presented realistically to people, a lot of people will not choose it because often all the treatment is doing is prolonging a life in a painful condition that might end more quickly in a less painful condition.

But assisted suicide is not used only for people who are terminally ill. It's being used for people in chronic pain or people who have chronic severe disabilities. When you look at those cases, I think what those people really need is social change, not assisted suicide.

To me it was very significant that the first eight or nine people that Jack Kervorkian helped to die were women. One was a woman with MS who had been abandoned by her husband, which is a very common thing that happens when women become disabled. (Women are much more likely to stay with a disabled husband or partner.) Another was a woman with chronic vaginal pain and, as we know, women's gynecological complaints don't get serious attention. Clearly

Passing the ADA

No covered entity shall discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability because of the disability of such individual in regard to job application procedures, the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees, employee compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

— Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

— First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The American Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law on July 26, 1990, extends civil rights protections to people with disabilities. It guarantees equal opportunity in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

The ADA was supported by ADAPT, a disability rights organization that focusses on issues of transportation and attendant services. ADAPT's methods are nonviolent confrontation and civil disobedience. Its members include a broad range of people with various disabilities.

The law is a victory with people with disabilities partly because it also requires access for people who are blind or deaf.

But religious institutions lobbied hard for exemptions. Consequently observers expect that the law will be interpreted broadly, exempting religious organizations from requirements that their buildings be accessible. This exemption extends to colleges, hospitals and nursing homes operated by religious organizations. (Title III will only be enforced against religious organizations when they receive federal funds or when a secular organization leases space.)

Five disabled demonstrators were arrested in December, 1993, after chaining themselves to a bus in Philadelphia that had a faulty wheelchair lift. Harvey Finkle, Impact Visuals

Meanwhile, public restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors' offices, pharmacies, stores, museums, libraries, parks, private schools, and day care centers must not discriminate on the basis of disability, and are required to make reasonable changes to avoid discrimination.

New construction and alterations must be accessible. And telephone companies must offer telephone relay services to people who use text telephones (TT) or similar devices.

A strong focus of the ADA is to protect employees. Employers are prohibited from discriminating against persons with disabilities who are otherwise qualified for a job. They are required to provide "reasonable accommodation" — including job restructuring and modification of equipment — to persons with disabilities, unless such accommodations would impose "undue hardship" on business operations, or unless the business employs fewer than 15 people.

Under Title I religious organizations with 15 or more employees will be required to comply. However, given the separation of church and state, clergy will not be protected.

this woman should have been referred to people who could really help her deal with the issues in her life and help her deal with her pain, rather than being offered suicide.

There was a woman with Alzheimer's whom Kervorkian helped to die. It was very clear that she didn't want to be a burden to her family, that she was used to taking care of them and she didn't want them taking care of her. It's really this female role: "I don't want to be a burden; this will be too hard on my family."

I'm concerned that we're getting told that medicine is supposed to get rid of disabled people. Cure us or kill us, which is an idea that is really deeply rooted in industrial culture. I think there will be tremendous social pressure to "choose" suicide and we'll also have the phenomenon of someone being incompetent and the choice being made for them, or being *seen as* incompetent to make the choice.

J.W-K.: Attendant care comes in here, right? If people had adequate social support, their outlook would be different?

A.F.: Yes. It's not just attendant care, but disability rights across the board. Larry McCaffey, who was one of the people to initiate a right-to-die suit, was living in terrible conditions. He was living in an intensive care unit in a hospital because he was on a respirator and because there wasn't attendant care in Georgia.

J.W-K.: So he could have had other options.

A.F.: Yes. Actually he ended up not dying. He ended up really having people go to bat for him.

J.W-K.: Are the issues that you're listing getting raised?

A.F.: To a certain extent. Unfortunately they're getting raised by people with reactionary politics. The religious right wing raises it. But the reaction of progressives, left liberals, has been really discouraging. They support Kervorkian. I think they don't understand what a tremendously dangerous road this is. The genocide began in Germany with disabled people and it began fairly openly. The first gas chambers were built in the basements of German mental hospitals and they were literally transported to the concentration camps. The first people who were killed in concentration camps were people who were diagnosed as sick.

Protesting the Human Genome Project

Disability activists are voicing concern over the implications of the Human Genome Project, a $3 billion, 15-year genetic research project co-sponsored by the Department of Energy and the National Institute of Health.

Begun in 1988, the project will include study of individual genes to see how they work at the molecular level. Study of genes associated with disability or disease could theoretically lead to treatments or cures. Recognition of such genes could make diagnostic testing possible.

Sociologist and disability activist Adrienne Asch writes:

"Our discomfort arises out of the knowledge that when information about life with a disability is described at all, it usually is a description filled with gloom and tragedy and limited opportunities completely at odds with the views of the disability rights movement and of the legislators and professionals whose work supports movement goals. Rather, the whole genetics enterprise is permeated by the medical model of disability — linking every difficulty to the physiological characteristics of the condition and not to any characteristics of the society in which people with the condition live their lives. ...

"Unfortunately, the ELSI Working Group membership contains neither a person who currently lives with a genetic condition and relies upon services for people with disabilities, nor one closely identified with the disability rights movement who can speak to the consequences of discrimination and of inhospitable social, communicative, and architectural environments. ...

"Here is a list of possible worthwhile topics: What are the conditions that permit some people with disabilities and their families to find satisfying lives at the same time that others with the same disabilities and apparently similar families do not? What actually goes on in genetic counseling sessions to help people make decisions? What do counselors actually say to their clients about the conditions that the tests detect?" (*Disability Studies Quarterly, Summer 1993*)

"Suppose Down syndrome, cystic fibrosis, or spina bifida were depicted not as an incalculable, irreparable tragedy but as a fact of being human?" Asch asks in another article. "Would we abort because of those conditions or seek to limit their adverse impact on life? ...

"In order to imagine bringing a disabled child into the world when abortion is possible, one must be able to imagine saying to a child: 'I wanted you enough and believed enough in who you could be that I felt you would have a life you would appreciate even with the difficulties your disability causes.'

"Instead of thinking of avoiding the life itself, might we think about how the expected problems can be reduced and avoided?" ("Reproductive Technology and Disability" by Adrienne Asch, in *Reproductive Laws for the 1990s*, ed., Sherrill Cohen and Nadine Taub, Humana Press, 1989)

Throughout the holocaust, doctors decided who was going to go to the gas chambers and who was going to go to the work camps. It always was a quasi-medical decision.

J.W-K.: You've written a short story in which voluntary suicide is being misused, so ambulances are on their way to pick people up who have disabilities but it's not voluntary.

A.F.: Those people are seen as incompetent to make a decision of their own, so they have substitute consent.

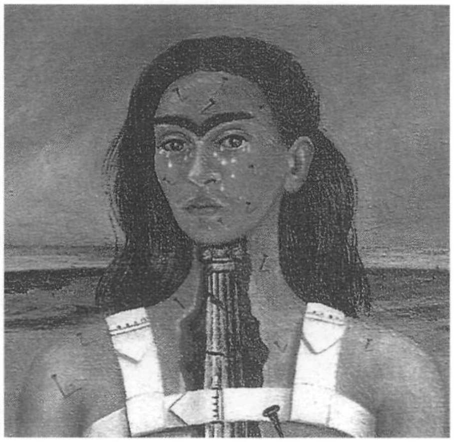
J.W-K.: I was glad that your character found protection in the home of some radical Christian lesbians.

Well, the last question that I have is in the area of sexuality. In the movie *Passion Fish,* however good the friendship between the attendant and the disabled person may be, I've heard you point out that the attendant is the rescuer and at the end, she has sex, while the woman in the wheelchair has a kiss. Is there more to say about that?

A.F.: Our society is profoundly uncomfortable with the notion of disabled people being sexual and this attitude extends even to people who are quite radical about sexuality. If you look at the book *Powers of Desire,* which is one of the first books that came out in the feminist movement talking about sexuality, there's *nothing* in there about disability and sexuality. *Pleasure and Danger,* which is another one of the early texts, *does* have one article, but it has a segregated focus. In the lengthy chapter that analyzed sexual oppression and repressive laws, disability was never mentioned. In fact, disabled people are frequently prevented from having sex if they live in institutions or quasi-institutions.

> *Our society is profoundly uncomfortable with the notion of disabled people being sexual and this attitude extends even to people who are quite radical about sexuality.*

There are marital penalties for people with severe disabilities who are dependent on government aid that make it virtually impossible for many disabled people to marry. If you marry, you can lose a tremendous amount of SSI, of Medicaid, of Section 8, so people literally can't marry.



J.W-K.: What if you marry someone in the disabled community?

A.F.: You still lose money.

J.W-K.: Really?! Do you think this is a conscious effort?

A.F.: I think there's a conscious effort to cut costs. There's an unconscious effort to keep disabled people from being sexual. Also, our culture emphasizes that to be sexual is to be physically fit. The whole way sexuality is constructed in our society excludes disabled people. And that has profound social and psychological impacts on people.

J.W-K.: I don't want to say this lightly, but the culture has that effect on *everyone* when sex is a high-gloss, high-marketing phenomenon. I think it's responsible in large part for the divorce rate, too. It's like you think you're entitled to ...

A.F.: Unlimited orgasms every time you get in bed. Yeah, that's true. On the other hand, most disabled people get brought up with the assumption that they will never have sex.

It's interesting that on the one hand disabled people are not seen as sexual. On the other hand, the rate of sexual abuse in the disabled community is very, very high. It speaks to the issue of powerlessness. Rape and sexual abuse are power issues and disabled children, disabled adults are easier to abuse sexually because they have less power. So more and more disabled girls are hearing that they'll have sex, but it'll be abusive. How do we deal with that and at the same time talk about sexual pleasure?

J.W-K.: Are there places where that conversation is happening?

A.F.: It's overshadowed by abuse. We're finally talking about the abuse and it's shocking and frightening — pleasure starts to seem secondary.

J.W-K.: Would that have been even more true in previous generations? Since people got closeted so much?

A.F.: Well, to a point. There's a British theorist about disability, named Victor Finkelstein, who really sees a big shift in terms of the treatment of disabled people around the industrial revolution. He says that prior to that time, disabled people were much more integrated into rural, agrarian economies. Where you had scarcity of labor, everybody's labor was needed. Also, in agrarian economies, you don't have the kind of regulation of the pace of work that you have in an industrialized society.

If you're working in the field, you know somebody can work three times as fast as somebody else and it doesn't disrupt production. With the rise of industrialization, there was an enormous increase in people being defined as needing institutionalization.

The Bible and exclusion, bias and prejudice

by Walter Wink

In the popular mind there are two kinds of people: normal and abnormal; normal and deformed; normal and disabled. Some are OK, others are not. But if pressed, we soon discover that everyone has disabilities, and that we are not talking about an either-or, but a continuum which runs from slightly disabled to extremely disabled.

Let me use myself as an example. I have been relatively healthy all my life, so that neither I nor those who know me would describe me as a person with disabilities. Nevertheless, in certain ways I am. My feet have hammertoes, and they have become increasingly painful, so that now I am unable to walk much more than a couple miles. I have had chronic back problems since childhood. I have had irregular heartbeat problems, so I don't drink caffeine. I have hypoglycemia, so I don't eat sugar. Minor things, all, but that is precisely my point: press anyone who looks "normal" and you find, instead, a person with disabilities.

Yet such people do not define themselves as "disabled." They think of themselves as relatively healthy people with certain disabilities. Now, those who are sensitive to these issues are trying to help us see that all of us are acceptable, regardless of our disabilities. The problem, then, is not with those with disabilities but with the idea of "normalcy." There are three sources of this pernicious notion of normalcy: Hebraic cultic thought, Christian perfectionism, and the values of the Enlightenment. The idea of normalcy, we will discover, is not only at the root of the mistreatment of people with disabilities. It is a pathological notion that creates illness, persecution, and the rejection of our God-given uniqueness.

> *The idea of normalcy is not only at the root of the mistreatment of people with disabilities. It is a pathological notion that creates illness, persecution, and the rejection of our God-given uniqueness.*

Blemish in Hebraic thought

In Hebraic sacrificial practice, both the gift offered to God and the priest who makes the offering must be "without blemish." This phrase, "without blemish," does not refer to some standard of perfection, as in later Greek thought. It flows rather from the belief that the gift must be the best one has — not the culls from the herd, not the runt lambs and three-legged goats, but the very best. And the priest making the offering is to be fully representative of the people. Thus, according to Leviticus 21:16-24, the priest cannot be blind, lame, have a mutilated face, a limb that is too long, a broken foot or hand, or a hunched back, be a dwarf, have a blemish in the eyes, an itching disease, or scabs, or crushed testicles. In short, the maimed, diseased and deformed are excluded from priestly service.

The Mishnah, a codification of rabbinic law from around 190 A.D., spells out what constitutes blemish in greater detail. The following deformities disqualified a priest from serving in the Temple: a head that is wedge-shaped, turnip-shaped, hammer-shaped, sunken in, or flat at the back; a humped back; a bald head; only one eyebrow, or eyebrows that hang down; two backs and two backbones; a flat nose; an eye too high or low, or one high and one low, or unmatched or watery eyes, or eyelashes that have fallen out; eyes that are too big or too small compared with his other parts; ears that are too little or spongy; an upper lip that juts out beyond the lower lip, or vice-versa, or lost teeth, or a man's breasts that hang down like a woman's, or a swollen belly, or a protruding navel, or falling sickness; too large a penis or testicles, or a missing or crushed testicle; knees or ankles that knock together, or are bow-legged, or swelling feet, or a swollen big toe, or a heel that juts out, or a sole as wide as that of a goose; webbed fingers or toes; black, red, or albino skin; leprosy; dangling warts. Also excluded are dwarves, deaf-mutes, imbeciles, or drunkards.

And then, at the end of the list, the only behaviors that disqualify: committing murder or being the victim of sexual abuse (Mishnah Bekhoroth 7.1-7).

What unites these diverse items is the notion of abnormality. These are not evil qualities; the person possessed of these disabilities is not cast out of the priesthood into which he has been born. He is still allowed to eat at the Temple table and draw all his sustenance from the Temple

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Walter Wink, a *Witness* contributing editor, is professor of biblical interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City. This article first appeared in *Auburn News*. Artist **Ida Mae Sydnor,** 72, lives in Philadelphia. Her life story, which includes spending childhood in an orphanage and being confined in a mental institution for 18 years, will be performed this summer through images, music and dance at a neighborhood school in southwest Philadelphia.

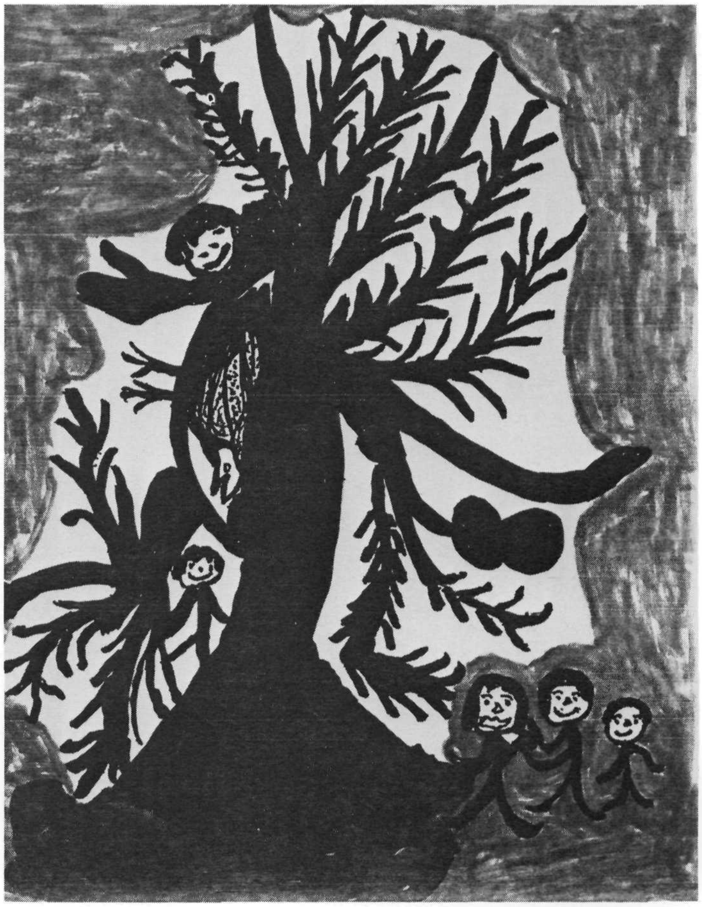
economy. He is simply unable to represent the people of Israel in the Temple before God.

Note also that these are not necessarily aesthetic categories. While a few of the items are explicitly noted as being "unqualified by reason of unsightliness" (such as fallen eyelashes and lost teeth), the rest are simply deviations from the norm.

This demand for unblemished sacrificial beasts and priests arose directly out of Israel's sense of God's holiness. Holiness was like a vibratory energy. Anyone who drew near to God picked up this energy. And this was not necessarily a good thing. God's holiness was like a blazing fire; one had to be protected against it. Ezekiel forbids priests to bring the most sacred sacrifices into the outer court or to enter it wearing their priestly clothing lest they sanctify the people ("communicate holiness to the people" — 46:20; 44:19)! Israel's very separateness as a people was a consequence of its ideas of holiness: God's holiness has fallen on Israel and has thus set it apart from all others. God's holiness must therefore be protected, almost, we might say, quarantined. Thus, the closer one got to the Holy of Holies in the Temple, the greater the holy power one encountered. By the same logic, one avoided everything unclean — anything that might contaminate God's holiness. Therefore, people in unclean trades, like tanners, or people in immoral occupations, like tax collectors and prostitutes, or people outside the covenant, like Samaritans and Gentiles, were to be avoided because they would sully the holiness of God.

Jesus' rejection of purity

Jesus' table fellowship with social outcasts was an acted parable of the dawning age of reconciliation. According to Marcus Borg, Jesus deliberately contravened the entire program of holiness of the Pharisees and other groups in first-century Judaism. He denied the equation of holiness with separation. Instead, says Borg, Jesus offered an economy of mercy that extends to all, especially the outsiders. The laws of clean and unclean were premised on the holiness of God: "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev.11:44). Consequently, Jesus, by abrogating the laws of purity, defilement and blemishes was announcing a new image of God: a God not concerned with normalcy, who loves precisely the marginalized and rejected.



The bird is a symbol Ida Mae Sydnor uses to depict herself. Recent works present the bird flying free.

Ida Mae Sydnor

Why did the Jesus movement break with the purity system? Surely not because it was found inconvenient or an infringement on their freedom to act. Rather, because rules of ritual purity are what keep the various people and parts of society in their "proper" place. Without purity regulations, there would be a crisis of distinctions in which everyone and everything was the same: women equal to men, outsiders equal to insiders, the sacred no different from the profane. There would be no holy place or holy priests or holy people. Gentile would be no different from Jew. "Clean" people would sit at table with "unclean"; no one would be better in God's sight. Domination depends on ranking. Without such distinctions, how can one know whom to dominate?

In contrast to the traditional view that God's holiness had to be sequestered in a special place and protected against contamination, Jesus regarded holiness/wholeness as outgoing and contagious. Holiness was not a power to be guarded, but a force exploding into the world to bring it more into line with God's purposes. It did not need to be shut up and quarantined in the Temple; it was now, through his healings and fellowship with the despised and rejected, breaking out into the world to transform it.

Therefore, Jesus taught when "normal" folks give a banquet they should not invite their friends — that is, other "normal" people of the same class, status, and persuasion, but rather the "poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind" (Luke 14:13,21). This phrase virtually summarizes the lists from Leviticus and the Mishnah of those who are blemished and unable to serve before God. Jesus is not, then, simply suggesting that the well-off practice charity; he is directing them to go out of their way to break down the barriers that have previously excluded those with disabilities.

Christian perfectionism

If Jesus threw out the holiness code with its exclusiveness, why are people with disabilities today still subject to exclusion, bias, prejudice, and discrimination?

Let me suggest at least one cause: the biblical command to be perfect as God is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Matthew had just said that God loves everyone equally (5:45), and then three verses later he springs the demand for perfection on us.

It may come as immediate relief to learn that Jesus could not have said, "Be perfect." There was no such word, or even concept, in Aramaic or Hebrew. And for good reason. The Second Commandment had forbidden the making of graven images (Exod. 20:4). Israel consequently never developed the visual arts. The word used by Matthew, *teleios*, was, however, a Greek aesthetic term. It described the perfect geometric form, or the perfect sculpture. In Israel, the closest thing to the notion of perfection was being without blemish.

In the Christian Middle Ages, Greek and Hebrew thought coalesced, with sin taking the place of blemish. Perfection was negatively defined as not behaving or even thinking in certain ways. But the sense of sin was so profound that moral perfectionism was no factor at all except among the "spiritual athletes," the ascetics, who made it their whole life's task to achieve moral perfection.

It was not until the Enlightenment, however, with its reintroduction of Greek aesthetic norms in neo-classical art and its search for universals, that widespread moralistic perfectionism became really imaginable. The merger of Protestant egalitarianism and Enlightenment rational equalitarianism now for the first time made the achievement of perfection — a heresy on its face — not only a cultural goal but a profound obsession.

In contrast to the traditional view that God's holiness had to be sequestered in a special place and protected against contamination, Jesus regarded holiness/wholeness as outgoing and contagious.

Jesus' alternative

Jesus never commanded this kind of perfectionism. Placed in its context within the rest of the paragraph, his saying about behaving like God becomes clear. We are not to be perfect, but, like God, all-encompassing.

This saying underscores Jesus' rejection of the holiness code as it was interpreted by his contemporaries. Mercy (God's all-inclusive love) is deliberately contrasted with exclusivity and segregation. His hearers could scarcely miss the echo of Lev. 19:2 here, except that its "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" has been altered to headline Jesus' new emphasis: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful," as Luke so much more effectively renders it (6:36).

We today are still living with the curse of perfectionism. For people with disabilities (and who does not have them?), perfectionism is the condemnation we feel for not having an acceptable body. Barbie dolls, Playboy or Penthouse centerfolds, and muscle and fashion magazines all trumpet an ideal figure, the perfect form to which we are all supposed to conform. That seemingly universally held standard ("norm") is in fact an engine of the devil.

The Enlightenment also taught that all people are created equal. If that is so, then it is your own fault if you have a mental or physical disability. The curious result of the Enlightenment doctrine of equality is the worst kind of inequality, built upon a denial of the obvious truth. We do not all begin from the same starting-gate in life. It is an outrageous lie that all people are created equal. It is just another version of blaming the victim.

The gospel teaches not that we are all equal, but that we are all incomparable. All people, regardless of how they score on the popularity ratings of normalcy, are of infinite value, are infinitely treasured, and are infinitely interesting. There is no end, no limit, to the love of God for each one of us. TW

The healers

by Kathi Wolfe

I will never forget a disconcerting encounter a few years ago, when I was trying to cross a busy metropolitan street. As usual, I held out my cane to avoid bumping into any obstacles and listened carefully to make sure no cars were coming. When the light changed and I stepped off the curb, some people gathered around me. They chanted "Jesus heals! Let him lay his hands on you!"

"Oh, no," I thought, "It's 'the healers' again. How do I escape this time?" For like most people with disabilities, I'm often confronted by those who feel that I will only be "whole" when my disability is taken away. And it seems they always stop me when I'm in a rush, hurrying to work or to catch a train.

"Jesus loves me as I am," I said, trying to get to the other side of the street.

"No," said a woman who grabbed my cane. "Your eyes are bad because you've sinned. If you pray hard enough, Jesus will forgive your sins and restore your sight. Then he'll love you."

"Look, I don't have time to talk. I've got to get to work. I can't call in late due to a 'healing delay,'" I snapped, taking my cane back.

"Where do you work?" asked a man in the crowd.

"I'm a minister and a writer," I answered, quickly walking away. Others called out, "How can this be? Why don't you want to be healed?"

"At last I'm out of their clutches," I thought when I reached my office. "Now I can get to work." Yet, reflecting on this encounter, I see that, despite their intrusiveness, "the healers" had raised some important spiritual concerns for those of us with disabilities. For as we assume leadership roles in the religious community and in society, we are examining such issues as "healing," sin and empowerment in relation to disabilities.

Following the example of women, African Americans and other oppressed groups, we are creating theology out of our experience. We're beginning to tell our own stories, rather than listen to the stories others have told about us.

As we start this work, we turn to the Bible. How can scripture, written some 2,000 years ago, help those of us with disabilities remain faithful, build self-esteem and fight for our civil rights?

In biblical times, many thought that disabilities were caused by sin. People with disabilities were outcasts, ignored by their families and neighbors — often left alone to beg. The Bible generally portrayed disabled people as helpless.

In stories ranging from the healing of the "paralytic" (Mark 2:1-2) to the healing of the man who had been ill for 38 years (John 5:5-15), Jesus offers assurance that repentance and faith will take away disabilities.

Whenever I read these stories, I cringe inwardly. I feel angry and excluded, as I do when scripture tells women to be silent in church or when the biblical accounts indicate an acceptance by the faithful of slavery. For, unlike these biblical writers and present-day "healers," I do not believe my disability was caused by sin or that I would be "made well, if only I had more faith." Many of us are coming to respect and feel pride in ourselves as we are, disabilities included.

Should those of us with disabilities today toss the Bible aside? The answer, surprisingly, is no. For tempted as we are at times to turn away from scripture, it can be a source of hope. Jesus in his ministry broke down barriers of fear and isolation. He acted against the customs of his society, by being present among people with disabilities and listening to them.

He carried out his ministry to "set at liberty the oppressed" and to "preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:16-20). Interestingly enough, along with stories of passive disabled characters, scripture also contains accounts of active people with disabilities. There is the story of the man who is blind in John 9. In this account, Jesus declares that the man's blindness is not caused by any sin committed by either him or his parents. When people ask his parents about their son's condition, they say, "He is of age, he will speak for himself." Even today, this can seem a radical statement to those of us with disabilities.

And the blind man in this story is not a passive stick figure. He becomes impatient when others don't understand about Jesus' ministry.

The biblical story of Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 4:10-17) presents a model of how a person with a disability can serve as a leader of a people seeking liberation. Many scholars contend that Moses had a speech impediment. When God asks Moses to lead the Israelites, he demurs, saying "but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

God is not deterred by this answer. Instead, God affirms the place of disabled people in the world by asking Moses, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

When Moses still objects to assuming this leadership role, God says Aaron will become Moses' assistant and will speak his words for him. This is perhaps the first example of "reasonable accommodation." In this way, Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Affirmative biblical stories can provide the energy to fend off "healers" and continue our journey — to the Promised Land of access and equal rights. TW

Kathi Wolfe is a United Church of Christ pastor in Falls Church, Va. This article is reprinted from *The Disability Rag,* Box 145, Louisville, Ky., 40201.

Celebrating disabled and minority women

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

I do not know how to convey to an able-bodied person (even the most empathetic) what it means suddenly to have to be cognizant of how your body works, moves — whether it be brain, limbs or internal organs ... [but] our greatest obstacles are the able-bodied society's myths and discrimination, not the disability. It stinks to be sick and disabled by it, but it's enraging to be trivialized or patronized.

— *Sanda Aronson*

This past April, the Disabled Artists' Network (D.A.N.) began its tenth year as a national information exchange of artists with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. All of its members are disabled, including its founder and executive director, Sanda Aronson. D.A.N. is fully member-supported and receives no outside funding. Unlike other disability self-help support groups, it focuses on confronting problems unique to the artistic profession. Members have created what Aronson calls a "living bulletin board," alerting others to exhibit and grant opportunities as well as contributing suggestions for the nitty-gritty how-to's involved in making art under difficult conditions.

Sanda Aronson was first a wife, then a single working parent — all while engaged in an art career — when in the mid-1970s she began to develop asthma and, later, chronic fatigue syndrome. As her symptoms worsened, she innovatively adapted her artmaking approach to deal with these new realities. Rather than working in clay, handmade paper and woodcuts as she had previously, she began to work more with collage and assemblage— forms that produce less dust, paint fumes, etc. But these are only a few of the issues she has had to face. Aronson is quick to point out the other-than-physical barriers thrust in her way.

"When I became disabled and was no longer able to hold an outside job," she writes in her article, "The Greatest Obstacles in Reaching the Public for Disabled Women Artists," "money (always a problem for artists) became a bigger problem. ... There is a myth that if one is disabled, the government rushes in to give Social Security Disability. False." In addition, she cites statistics showing that women are granted disability benefits less often than men and that they consistently receive smaller checks, since Social Security, unlike welfare, is based upon past earnings. Women (and artists) traditionally hold the lowest-paying jobs.

Both through their art and through D.A.N., Aronson and her colleagues have been tireless in their efforts to create a base of support for themselves and to make their voices heard in able-bodied circles. *American Herstory, Mystory, Ourstory* is a collage that Aronson created in 1988 for a national conference commemorating the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution held at the Atlanta College of Art. The show subsequently toured the country for two years. In it, Aronson celebrates women in American history, especially those excluded from the mainstream: disabled and minority women. Included are Helen Keller, Anne Sullivan, Mary Cassatt, Frida Kahlo and Sojourner Truth, as well as an homage to Aronson's Jewish grandmother who worked a pushcart in lower Manhattan.

"Disabled artists who are women face double discrimination," Aronson writes. There are the pandemic myths that women and/or disabled artists are making art as therapy, or as a nice hobby to pass the time. And when the disabled are portrayed by the media at all, they are presented as inspirational heroes, as "supercrips" in Aronson's words, or as "weepy, telethon types."

She also takes issue with euphemisms like "differently abled" or "physically challenged," which Aronson views as "obnoxious bandaids to make the able-bodied feel better."

The D.A.N. newsletter has branched out to a wide range of artists during the past decade, and the organization has received significant attention in art journals. Consequently, D.A.N. has not only been functioning as a community builder for the disabled, but has developed into a prophetic voice to the able-bodied.

When the gospels tell us that Jesus made the blind see, the deaf hear and the lame walk, it is only too easy for us modern-day Christians to dismiss these individual miracles as the kind of thing that could have been effected by a Son of God. As we come to recognize the social implications of Jesus's actions, however, and to see the church as his resurrected body here and now, we might also come to believe that it is entirely possible to

art and society

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

***American Herstory, Mystery, Ourstory,* 1988, collage by Sanda Aronson ©**

Photo by Stanley Willard

effect these same miracles on a societal level by *allowing* the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. Physically, this might mean lobbying (and paying taxes) for "talking" buses, close-captioned TV, or cut curbs and access ramps. Spiritually, it means confronting those of us who consider ourselves able-bodied to take the most basic steps to remove the obstacles that prevent the incorporation of all members of society into full participation.

The Disabled Artists Network can be reached at: PO Box 20781, New York, NY, 10025.

TW

Indianapolis '94

Vital Signs

Fighting the 'Let's kill 'em' mentality: an interview with William W. Rankin

Last fall, William Rankin was installed as dean of the Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) in Cambridge, Mass., a seminary which has championed the cause of full participation in the church for gay and lesbian persons, especially in the area of ordained ministry.

Julie A. Wortman: There has been a lot of emphasis on the need for "dialogue" about human sexuality within the church. I get the sense that EDS is impatient with that dialogue?

William Rankin: Dialogue in the church always needs to go on around two foundational questions. One is, "Who is God?" and the other is, "What is required of us as creatures standing before the face of God intending to do right and to be good?"

There is no question that there is some impatience at EDS about all of the dialogue on sexuality. We have a lot of lesbian and gay students. They and I are impatient, but you must understand that this impatience is rooted in pain. In the minds of a lot of people here they have waited a long time already. What seems at first blush to be impatience may really be weariness from having allowed people to scorn them and do those hurtful personal things that you see reflected in the cold statistics that indicate, for instance, that gay and lesbian teenagers commit suicide at twice the rate that straight teenagers do. The suffering over time is more than anyone should have to bear. So while we should honor the folks who disagree with us, maybe the people who disagree with us should understand there's a long and awful history of oppression. The problem isn't with gay men and lesbians, it's with an attitude that says, when push comes to shove, "Let's kill 'em." That spirit is still alive and well in our country — and because we are only fallible human beings, it's also alive and well in the church.

J.W.: It seems like EDS would be a wonderful place to spend three years. I wonder, though, if you are preparing people for the uphill battle they will have to face in the church on this and other justice issues?

William Rankin

W. R.: What I'm after is that people go out of here with the acuity to know the spiritual, moral, theological and sociological realities of the context within which they find themselves so that they can, with authenticity and in faithfulness to the best that's in the Christian heritage, minister competently with people. The point is to enable our students to go out and identify God in the uniqueness of a given situation. And that does not mean banging them over the head with an ideology, nor does it mean not challenging them.

In the congregations where I've been — and in some of these places there was a lot of white male heterosexual money and people who by and large voted differently than I voted — people appreciated it when I had done my homework on an issue that I knew would be controversial and then laid my views out without trying to jam them down their throats. If there's a problem in the churches, it may be that the folks haven't been challenged enough.

There's the mission of the church and there is the mission of God — and the two are not necessarily the same. I want the people who go out of here to be effective in the church concerning the mission of God.

J.W.: I've heard that at EDS there is an unusually high percentage of students who are not seeking ordination?

W. R.: I don't know how we stand on that as compared to other seminaries, but I've been surprised in talking with incoming students to find that if they're not already on the ordination track, virtually all of them want to get on it. The problem is that the church is culturally lagging behind us. When we as a church solve the problem of both misogyny and homophobia, I predict that the great majority of people who are here and have gone through here will end up being ordained. But the church discriminates against them.

J.W.: I met an out gay man at EDS last year who was getting ready to look for a job — he was on the ordination track. I assume that you feel some responsibility for helping gay and lesbian students face the reality that jobs in the church, especially clergy jobs, will be hard to find?

W.R.: We work hard to affect the climate of the Episcopal Church so that it is more gracious and welcoming to all people. If and when we can succeed, it will be better for a number of our graduates. But I should say we are not by any means the only Episcopal seminary with a significant number of gay and lesbian students facing that situation. We're just the only one that is really out about it.

I think the standing of gay men and lesbians at one level or another of the church's life is going to be a hot issue at General Convention — and it *should* be, because that's the particular focus of the justice issue for us in this time and place. I hope the Episcopal Church can summon enough grace to recognize that the two extremes are to welcome folks who are gay and lesbian or to adopt a spirit that says "Kill 'em." And then, perhaps, we can move on.

Is there hope for this pastoral?

by John M. Gessell

The General Convention of 1976 resolved that "homosexuals are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance and pastoral care of the Church." It is time, six conventions later, that the full implications of this resolution be confirmed. But the House of Bishops' "pastoral teaching" on human sexuality (the work of the "A104sa committee," named after the "compromise" resolution passed at the 1991 General Convention which, among other things, directed the bishops to prepare the pastoral) is now undergoing its fourth revision, under the pressure of conservative forces.

It is not clear that the bishops can produce this pastoral given their present disarray. The insistence on "collegiality," a novel source of authority, is a thinly disguised attempt to avoid conflict and to stifle disagreement, debate, and dissent.

When they meet, the bishops appear to be more a human potential group than a legislative body carefully debating and formulating policy. I do not begrudge the bishops opportunities for personal growth and mutual support. But the bishops have specific canonical and constitutional responsibilities. Their main work is shepherding. Yet they seem to have lost the mettle for the debate of substantive issues, preferring to sit around tables for Bible study and prayer. What is needed is a resolve to creativity, to take up the work of the church as a community of compassion and peace, the action which comes out of a life of prayer. This is done by debate and legislation, not by "collegiality."

The bishops also seem unable to deal with the homophobia among their members. Their treatment of Otis Charles (the retired bishop of Utah, who came out as a gay man in September, 1993) at their Panama meeting was churlish and nothing short of scandalous. If the church is to speak a healing and creative word on the issues of human sexuality, acts of repentance and confession are required in order to atone for the tacit and explicit condemnation to self-hatred, self-loathing and death of many gays and lesbians.

A phobic and sexist approach to a report on human sexuality will spell failure. And so the prospect of the report fills me with anxiety. But I also have my hopes.

My greatest hope is that the committee will be able to move beyond the fixed positions of the past in order to lay out the conditions for a healthy community of moral discourse, producing a text to guide the whole church in moral reflection. Such a text could become a model for disclosing the principles of a just society and could point the way to a church which could embrace into full inclusion all of God's children on equal terms. This would be a welcome assertion of faith, and a full realization of the 1976 resolution of General Convention on homosexual persons in the Church. It would be an obedient response to I John 4:20, "If you say you love God and hate your brother or sister, you are a liar."

This church has no magisterium. It is General Convention which is authoritative, whose decisions are reached after debate by clergy, laity, and bishops concurring.

I would hope that the report would also include a careful setting forth of the dialectic between the "tradition" of church teaching on sexuality and the "discontinuities" which church people experience between that teaching and their experience. This could be an excitingly creative process, for this is how theology gets done. Out of such a dialogue we might expect indications of the direction for a dialectical resolution in order that vital theological and moral discourse can emerge.

I would also hope that the report would take steps toward the formulation of a theology of homosexuality in the context of the church's creation faith. At the very least, a basis for the exploration and development of this theology is necessary if progress is to be made in the dialogue within the church on human sexuality.

Finally, I hope that the committee will produce a document which can be discussed and debated by General Convention and be adopted as the church's teaching on human sexuality. The church needs to speak clearly on what has become an obsessive issue in the society at large, and only General Convention can issue an authoritative teaching on this matter for the Episcopal Church.

This would, I know, require an amendment of the process implied for receiving the report. It has been publicly called a "pastoral teaching." Officially (canonically) there is no such thing and no provision for such a thing as a "pastoral teaching." There are pastoral letters from the House of Bishops to the people, to be read in the churches. There are resolutions which, when adopted by the convention in both houses, become authoritative for the church. The former are not debated in Convention; the latter are. In talking with some bishops I get the impression that the report is not to be discussed but simply accepted — not as a pastoral letter from the bishops, but as normative and binding on Episcopalians as if from some "magisterium." But this church has no magisterium and no provision for one. It is General Convention which is authoritative, whose decisions are reached after debate by clergy, laity, and bishops concurring. Without this the report from Committee A104sa will have little value.

Therefore I call upon General Convention to gather itself together at Indianapolis and to speak, not as the scribes, but as having authority.

John M. Gessell is Professor of Christian Ethics, Emeritus, University of the South, and Founder and Executive Director of the Cumberland Center for Justice and Peace, in Sewanee, Tenn.

The hot-button issue: clergy sexual misconduct

by Jan Nunley

Clergy sexual misconduct promises to be *the* hot-button issue at this year's General Convention in Indianapolis, a topic that will likely make *everyone* squirm — men and women, gay, lesbian, and straight, liberal and conservative, clergy and laity alike.

The focus of the debate will be proposed revisions to the church's canons on ecclesiastical discipline. The topic has commanded growing churchwide attention since shortly after the 1991 *General Convention in Phoenix*, when the House of Deputies' vice president, Wallace Frey, admitted to sexual misconduct with several older teenage boys in his congregation. Frey resigned his office and his priesthood as well.

Two cases in the last year have also commanded widespread attention. In 1993 allegations of adultery were made against the newly-elected Suffragan Bishop of Virginia, Antoine Lamont Campbell of South Carolina. Campbell was acquitted of adultery in a church trial, but not before two other women emerged — one priest, one lay — charging him with sexual harassment. The Diocese of Virginia's Standing Committee conducted its own investigation of the charges, and concluded that they "could not certify ... that [they] saw no impediments to Canon Campbell's consecration as a bishop in God's church." Campbell consented to withdrawing his name from the election. He was inhibited from the practice of ministry in South Carolina by the diocese's bishop, Edward Salmon, pending resolution of the sexual harassment charges.

Meanwhile, Bruce Newell, now on the staff of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, was deposed from the ordained ministry last October following an ecclesiastical trial in Virginia on charges of violating his ordination vows by "ministering in an improper or misleading manner." The charges first surfaced in 1988, when several women complained to the rector of Falls Church about Newell's behavior. As a result, Newell's duties there were terminated and he was ordered by Virginia's bishop, Peter James Lee, to undergo counseling. Four years later, one of the women reported to Lee a more detailed version of the events and the diocese brought a formal presentment against Newell. Bishop William Frey, dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., says the deposition will not affect Newell's staff position at the seminary. (Frey has felt the sting of clergy misconduct trials as well, with a $1.2 million judgment levied against the Diocese of Colorado in 1991 for covering up a priest's misconduct while Frey was bishop there.)

In adjudicating such cases, it's important to make it clear that all procedures reflect the standard of "innocent until proven guilty," says Bishop Harold Hopkins of the national church's Office of Pastoral Development. "Clergy feel concerned about the possibility of false accusations, or of bishops acting precipitously. That's where the struggles will be on this issue."

> *"Clergy feel concerned about the possibility of false accusations, or of bishops acting precipitously. That's where the struggles will be on this issue." — Harold Hopkins*

Should an allegation be substantiated and the offender admit guilt, both national and diocesan canons provide some guidelines as to the disposition of the case. When the charge is "conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy," national canon requires consent of the Standing Committee. Some combination of inhibiting the clergyperson and required therapy is a frequent sentence. In tougher cases, suspension or even deposition from Holy Orders is possible.

If the accused denies the charges, things get more complicated. The national canons detail the charges for which clergy may be tried, but it's up to the dioceses to establish the composition of courts and trial procedures. In South Carolina, the president of the Standing Committee who chooses the all-clergy jury. Since South Carolina currently has only one resident woman presbyter, that jury is likely to be all male. Georgia, by contrast, elects its ecclesiastical court to six-year terms at its diocesan convention, and Virginia selects jurors from a 12-member standing jury appointed annually by the bishop.

Charleston, S.C., attorney Howell Morrison, who served as Church Advocate — essentially, the prosecutor — in Campbell's adultery trial, questions the wide variation in trial procedures from diocese to diocese, and the deviation from established custom in secular courts. While the national canons invest the courts with subpoena powers, and the canons state that church members have a "duty" to give evidence, compliance is purely voluntary, and frequently clergy and laity just don't want to get involved.

Confusing, too, are the criteria by which a standard of proof is set. In Campbell's trial, the standard was "beyond a reasonable shadow of a doubt" — a burden of proof usually reserved for criminal acts. Virginia's standard is "clear and convincing evidence," the lowest standard of proof; others use a "preponderance of the evidence" standard.

According to Hopkins, there may be an attempt at General Convention to set "clear and convincing evidence" as a national standard, along with the other proposed improvements to Title IV. But modifying other procedures, such as jury composition, may meet resistance from dioceses already concerned about national church "meddling" in local affairs. The all-clergy jury predominates in most dioceses, the assumption being that clergy should be tried by a jury of their peers. But some lay people, says Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) president, Sally Bucklee, question whether the standard of "peer" shouldn't be baptism rather than ordination, to ensure that professional sympathies don't get in the way of a fair hearing.

Another concern is the process of inhibiting a priest while charges are pending. Hopkins says proposed revisions to Title IV may give bishops more authority to remove clergy temporarily "without prejudice," to protect the interests of all concerned.

The question of disclosure is also important, especially as victims appeal to the secular judicial system for justice. Texas' bishop, Maurice Benitez, for example, is coming under heavy fire for encouraging a Houston parish to call Campbell as rector without informing them that he had been inhibited by his bishop in South Carolina. Benitez had turned down the parish's first choice for the position, a woman, and suggested Campbell as an alternative. "Bishops must disclose to a parish search committee if a priest is inhibited, and must be called to task if they don't," emphasizes Bucklee.

Particularly of concern to some is the fact that Benitez is up for re-election to the Church Pension Fund board, which oversees liability insurance with regard to clergy sexual misconduct. "This raises questions about his potential stewardship of the assets of the national church, which would be at risk in a civil lawsuit," says Houston attorney and active laywoman Muffy Moroney.

Standards for sentencing are also in question. Newell complains that being deposed five years after his initial punishment constitutes "double jeopardy," since he feels he has demonstrated "repentance and amendment of life" in the five years since losing his job.

But many people are worried that the most serious problems with the adjudicatory system have to do, not with clergy discipline, but with the process by which bishops and dioceses respond to complaints of impropriety. Many bishops and other supervisors trivialize complaints, some women claim. The EWC's Bucklee reports that women complaining about sexual misconduct by male clergy are regularly counter-accused of being "sick, crazy, or menopausal" in some dioceses.

Some dioceses have put procedures in place to ensure fair treatment of both accuser and accused. Rhode Island maintains two "advocates" — one clergy, one layperson — who are charged with investigating allegations and with assisting victims in preparing a formal complaint. Virginia's bishop assigns a "response team" of trained clergy and laypeople to investigate charges, assist both complainant and accused and lead a "process for healing" for affected congregations.

A call for walking our talk

Clergy sexual misconduct clearly isn't the only sexuality-related issue that will come before General Convention. The Standing Commission on Human Affairs has prepared its report to the Convention, chastising the church for not "walking our talk" with regard to civil and human rights protections for lesbians and gay men and saying it's "like an abusive parent" to many homosexuals.

"The very people who appeal to the 1979 General Convention resolution against the ordination of 'practicing' homosexuals as if it were canon law," says the report, "are sometimes the same people who ignore the resolutions upholding full civil rights for gay men and lesbians and which proclaim that 'homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the church.' " That "full and equal claim" to Church membership, maintains the report, implies strongly that ordination and blessing of lesbian and gay unions should not be denied unless the Church is willing to rescind their baptism as well. The report also stresses the urgent need for effective youth ministries in the church to provide leadership and mentoring for "youth at risk."

— *J.N.*

But these policies are not universal, or even widespread. Virginia's comprehensive 32-page procedure was only issued this spring, after a long period of study. "There is a sense of making it up as you go along [in most dioceses]," says Virginia's communications director, Sarah Bartenstein.

Perhaps the most devastating criticism of the clergy misconduct process is that in some dioceses it fails to meet the most basic standard of pastoral care and confidentiality. "I would never recommend that another person go through this," said one complainant who asked to remain anonymous, noting that clergy closed ranks around the priest she accused and her bishop virtually ignored her.

Other issues also swirl about when sexual misconduct is alleged. For example, cultural and regional differences in what's considered appropriate levels of intimacy and touching do occur. Accusations of misconduct against women are rare, but they do occur, and sexism can cut both ways; an accusation by a lay man against a female clergyperson might not be taken as seriously because the "power differential" isn't perceived to be as great as it would be with male clergy. Is there racism involved? Campbell is an African American, married to a white woman. All his accusers are white women as well. Campbell maintains stereotypes about young black men fueled the harassment charges; others say that's a red herring. And homophobia, too, may also muddy the waters in a church where many believe any homosexual relationship, committed or not, is unacceptable.

In any event, the days of a young clergyman being encouraged to court the senior warden's daughter are probably long past. Virginia's policy says "such relationships may not truly be mutual" and advises clergy attracted to parishioners to "seek discernment" with the bishop, colleagues, or representatives of the parish.

In the final analysis, even a thorough revision of the national canons on ecclesiastical discipline and suggested policy changes for dioceses probably won't clear the air entirely. But despite widespread dissatisfaction with how the Episcopal Church is addressing clergy sexual misconduct, it may be ahead of the curve on this issue when other denominations are considered. "People tell me we are," says Bishop Hopkins, "which may say something about how little is being done elsewhere."

Jan Nunley is a regular contributor to The Witness *and a candidate for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Rhode Island. She is also newscaster for National Public Radio's "Living on Earth."*

EcuTakes:

United Church of Christ

Bill Hulteen is Executive Director of the Office For Church Life and Leadership, United Church of Christ.

The General Synod pronouncement [on sexual harassment and abuse in 1991] included not only clergy but all members and leaders of the church. Local churches are being resourced to greater sensitivity to the way they recruit, train and supervise their leaders, especially those who work with youth. There are seminars all over the country for clergy, to introduce the nature of sexual harassment.

Committees on Church and Ministry [regional church bodies] are now much better prepared to deal with the discipline questions related to sexual misconduct. We cannot set a policy that is binding locally, but we are in the fifth draft of procedural guidelines for Committees to use in cases of misconduct. We are training response teams to deal with the claimant, the alleged perpetrator, the congregation, and the families of those persons.

[The UCC also recently added a background check and release form to the profile of each minister seeking placement. Ministers are asked to disclose their histories in matters such as disciplinary actions by church-related or professional bodies, criminal convictions and lawsuits, and termination of employment for sexual, physical or financial misconduct. They are also required to sign a release form authorizing response to inquiries concerning their background and character.

The Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society administers a fund for the healing of victims of sexual harassment and abuse in the church.]

Anglican Church of Canada

Vianney Carriere is News Editor of the Anglican Journal.

The case in the Diocese of Ontario is probably the best-known one right now. A choirmaster at the Cathedral in Kingston who was there about 15 years abused dozens of children in the choir over pretty well all that time. It didn't come to light until three or four years ago, largely through the efforts of the local newspaper.

A group of parents of victims took strong exception to how the Cathedral responded. The issue of an apology was a live one from the start. They wanted an acknowledgement from the church that what had gone on was wrong.

The apology was delayed, but the Bishop of Ontario apologized about a year ago.

I think because of the scope of the case and the length of time, and because of the ongoing controversy over the church's response, it had quite an impact on the church getting some mechanisms in the works so it could respond more effectively. Policies are being formulated diocese by diocese.

The way the national church fit in was that the primate appointed someone he called a convener — Mary Wells, one of the national experts here on child sexual abuse, who drafted much of the federal legislation in this area. She was appointed for one year, and worked in the community on healing and reconciliation.

Roman Catholic Church

Francis Maniscalco is director of the Office for Media Relations of the U.S. Catholic Conference.

The actual handling of cases is done diocese by diocese. In some dioceses, like Chicago, this has been delegated to a layperson; in others, it is handled by the priest personnel office or the vicar or chancellor.

The bishops have discussed it at least since 1985 in national meetings. They have enunciated a group of actions that ought to be taken in case of an allegation. When an accusation is made, it should be investigated. If it is well-founded the person accused is sent for evaluation and treatment. There is an extension of pastoral care to the victim. If there are civil aspects they should be cooperated with, and the matter should be dealt with as openly as possible. These principles speak mainly to accusations of current abuse.

For some time now, the vast majority of cases are accusations from the past. It seems like we're dealing with 30 or more years of cases in a very short period of time.

In June of 1993 the bishops established an ad hoc committee on sexual abuse, made up of seven bishop members and some consultants. They are examining what is being done in dioceses in the Catholic Church, and in other cases, to give advice to the bishops. Their first major report is due at the November business meeting of the bishops.

There are questions about ministry, what to do about priests who behave in that way — especially with pedophile behavior, which is compulsive and not curable. Can this person under supervision function in ministry — for example, in a purely administrative position? What happens when the person declines to be part of a process of dismissal from the priesthood? In Canon Law there is a five-year statute of limitations. There are some bishops who have taken this to Rome, to find a way to address the issue in this country.

Insurrection in Chiapas

by Wes Rehberg

The Zapatista rebellion erupted in Chiapas on January 1 — the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was to take effect. My spouse Eileen Robertson-Rehberg and I, human rights advocates interested in insurgency and counterinsurgency, responded by travelling to Mexico and by organizing support in Central New York where we live.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) insurrection arose from centuries of colonial and neocolonial oppression, exacerbated by the certainty that NAFTA would create an influx of U.S. products and undercut Mexican products. Involved in the EZLN's insurgence in January was the temporary taking of several Chiapan towns including San Cristóbal de las Casas, a tourist mecca, and other small localities: Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano. They also kidnapped a former Chiapan governor.

The Mexican government, the PRI, read the message of the insurrection and the threat to NAFTA clearly, and sought peace talks, which culminated in an accord that was only partially satisfactory to the EZLN but was to be the basis of continuing negotiations. Basic grievances such as land reforms were deferred and a call for President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's resignation refused, but the government agreed in March to a more inclusive democratic process, including a greater indigenous voice and vote.

In the course of the peace talks the EZLN released the kidnapped Chiapan ex-governor. Yet government counterinsurgency continued. Despite a cease-fire and the accord, death squads operated more openly and Latino municipal leaders formed municipally sanctioned goon squads. Along with the counterinsurgency, came the labels used to neutralize the legitimate grievances behind an insurrection, labels such as "wild fanatics" and "outdated Marxist revolutionaries," and now even "under the influence of liberation theology."

During Holy Week, liberation advocates such as Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, a peace negotiator under death threat from landowners, climbed into pulpits to continue the call for justice, for conversion, for an end to oppression, for a ceasing of the violence upon which not only Mexico feeds, but which gratifies far too many lusts worldwide. Holy Week culminates in a brutal death, an empty tomb, a resurrection, and astonishingly, in the amazing transreflexive communal moment of the Pentecost, the "Hineni" that explodes in the mutual outcry of human and divine together in the realization that they are one — "Here I am!"

The Zapatistas shout a similar cry — "Here We Are!" — the exploited poor, flawed, yet victimized. The primary symbol of the EZLN is the ski-mask of the spokesperson of the Clandestine Revolutionary Committee of the EZLN, subcomandante Marcos. Mask and eloquence merge, the mask the mark of power, the eloquence the mark of the sophisticated intelligence that defies the indexes of counterinsurgency.

The ski mask is reproduced in the imagination of the oppressed in dolls sold by the indigenous in marketplaces and in the stories that circulate in the currents of the "wind below."

The EZLN has profound depth, and its "wind below," the current of revolution, shudders through the land, rising to meet the "wind above," the colonizing powers, in storms.

In another part of Mexico, the central-eastern state of Hidalgo, we saw a child run out of a mountain rural adobe hut wearing a ski mask, to the amusement of members of a Christian base community. The indigenous base communities we visited, their people a mixture of Mexicas, Otomí and Nahuatl Indians, reminded one of what sub-comandante Marcos suggests when he writes of the "wind below." Marcos writes it "will come from the mountains, born under the trees and conspiring for a new world, so new that it is barely an intuition in the heart which inspires it." This is a "collective wind" born of "dignity and defiance," the "product" of a "long chain of disgraces and rebellions" spread under the poisonous rains of the colonizing wind from above. The wind below has found embodiment, pleasure in political grace, a sense of direction and meaning, and has been made flesh not only in the defiance of the EZLN but also in the shaky survival strategies and reflective practices of Christian base communities.

The EZLN, observing the continuing activity of death squads, suspended key talks it was to hold with indigenous community leaders who were to provide input into the next phase of the peace talks. This suspension in mid-April pushed a full-blown peace agreement further off in the distance, closer to the national presidential election on August 21. The PRI is expected to win, but the ski-mask is a formidable obstacle, a sign embodied in the imagination of the sophisticated revolutionaries in the Chiapas jungle highlands. TW

Wes Rehberg is a liberation theologian whose predominant cultural memory is of himself as a white outcast, as "white trash." As a result, he is working on "Second-Hand and Third-Class: A Liberation Theology of White Trash," which he hopes will be accepted someday as a doctoral dissertation.

Voting for more than pizza

by Julie A. Wortman

Witness managing editor Julie Wortman was a member of an 11-person Episcopal Peace Fellowship delegation that travelled to El Salvador in March as part of an ecumenical election observation effort. The March 20 national elections for president, deputies to the Legislative Assembly and municipal mayors were the first since peace accords were signed two years ago by the government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), concluding 12 years of civil war. Candidates represented the full political spectrum, from right to left. No presidential candidate received a majority of the votes cast. The governing Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA) party's Armando Calderón Sol won the run-off election held April 24. Sol's opponent was Rubén Zamora, candidate of the Democratic Convergence coalition and the FMLN.

The first evening of our stay in El Salvador we ate dinner in a San Salvador Pizza Hut. There was a Dunkin' Donuts across the street. The colors of the governing ARENA party, the political faction favored to win the upcoming March 20 presidential election, covered every available pole and rock: red, white and blue. People were sporting T-shirts celebrating the Miami Dolphins, Big Sur and rock music. Exhaust fumes from the traffic outside choked the air and the ground was littered with trash.

I hadn't expected to feel so much at home, nor did I want to.

In part, I admit, I was disappointed that this "foreign" place didn't immediately seem more picturesque and exotic. But as I unhappily chewed on my pizza it was also rapidly dawning on me that, unlike in South Africa, "free and fair" elections in El Salvador would not inevitably lead to profound social change.

The 12-year civil war here had been, in essence, a class war — it is said that 200 families run the country, with 80 percent of the wealth in the hands of two percent of the population. While part of the FMLN's goal was to shift those percentages in favor of the poor, most of those who had fought with the guerillas had hoped for a fundamentally different bottom line than that contemplated by trickle-down economics — people, not dollars. With capitalism so obviously entrenched and with a 100-year history of oligarchic rule and long-term foreign interests to overcome, how could elections make a difference? Many people, especially the poor, would be unable to vote because of problems with the voter-registration process and, even if they could vote, decades of intimidation had conditioned them to believe that it was safer to remain at home. Recent death squad-like assassinations of political figures had only reenforced this perception. The principle of majority rule, it appeared, was undoubtedly going to work in favor of the establishment ARENA party.

> *"As younger people we really need change and we think we don't need to emigrate to the U.S. to get it."*
>
> *— Romulo Ramos*

But the inevitability of an ARENA victory did not seem to dampen the spirits of the people we met.

Our home base in San Salvador was St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church. Luis Serrano has been the rector there since 1972. During the war, 600 people a month came to St. John's for food. Most were from mountain communities in FMLN-held territory. "The image of the church was of solidarity with the people," Serrano said. When the army bombed the city's poor neighborhoods in retaliation for the FMLN's 1989 offensive, St. John's rapidly filled with frightened people seeking safe shelter. The infamous Treasury Police jailed Serrano and those who were helping him, charging that they were supporting the enemy. Serrano spent 45 days in prison. He still goes nowhere without a bodyguard.

"I think the people after 12 years of war know where they are," Serrano said. "They understand that to work in favor of the poor is worth dying for. To be willing to be killed is a tremendous weapon."

Despite his belief that ARENA's Calderón Sol was involved with the death squads — people say Sol is a furious, impulsive man inclined to using force to get his way — Serrano believes the future of El Salvador is "open."

"Maintaining a good international image means money to the government," he said. "In any conflicted moment ONUSAL [the United Nations observer mission] will have the last word because of the Peace Accords."

In addition to setting the terms for disarmament and free elections, the Peace Accords spell out requirements for replacing the military police force with a national civil police; a land transfer program that will benefit ex-guerillas and others; human rights investigations and monitoring; and reintegration programs for ex-combatants.

Julie A. Wortman is managing editor of *The Witness.*

"Neither the elections nor the winners define democracy for El Salvador — only the peace accords," Carlos Ramos from Central American University (UCA) told the ecumenical delegation of election observers after the elections. "It is not so important what happened on March 20, but what is the future of the peace accords. ARENA now has the majority of the power, and will have a tendency to eliminate the peace accords through political process. Only pressure from the left and international community will counteract that."

And yet something important did seem to happen on that election Sunday. A portion of our group was stationed at polling stations in the eastern part of the country, in the Department of San Miguel, one of the most prosperous agricultural areas in El Salvador. (We stayed at *Caserio El Mogote*, a small Lutheran church compound lying in the shadow of a volcano just outside the town of El Jorge. Our first night there we dined not on pizza, but on an egg-and-avocado salad, *frijoles*, bread and sausages. Our host, Carlos Maravilla, and his wife, Blanca, had raised most of the food themselves, including our coffee.) Richard Bower and I spent the day at the public school in El Transito, a town where an estimated 12,000 people had registered to vote.

From 7:55 a.m., when the polls opened, until late into the evening after the polls had closed, we witnessed hundreds after hundreds of people cautiously trying on democratic process. In El Transito, between the election officials who staffed the 30 voting stations and the party representatives or *vigilantes* who stood by watching for irregularities, we saw about 360 people from every part of the political spectrum working intently and cooperatively to process the voters and then count the ballots. There was a *fiesta* atmosphere — people had dressed up for the occasion and, after voting, many remained to watch or visit with friends and neighbors. Some had spent two or three hours travelling to the polls on foot. Young men lounged in groups, watching young women who strolled by arm-in-arm.

We saw no overt acts of intimidation, but there were plenty of irregularities and problems that made these elections less than "free and fair." We and other election observers saw people turned away because their names couldn't be found on the voting lists, election officials wearing campaign paraphernalia and *vigilantes* who performed election officials' duties. One election worker later told us of votes being smuggled into the polls in fast-food containers. An estimated 47 percent of the people didn't vote and it was clear that the whole system of voter registration was less than user-friendly, especially in a country with so much illiteracy. Still, people seemed to feel free to point the abuses out (many did to us) and to demand compliance with the rules.

In the end, the FMLN, while not sweeping the elections, secured a political foothold in the national assembly and in two dozen or so towns. "We've worked hard to be a real alternative to the way things are in this country," Manuel Quintanilla, a FMLN activist told us before the election. "We're not fanatics. We will accept a democratic decision. For us the struggle doesn't end tomorrow."

As for my Pizza Hut worries, I was relieved to find a significant number of Salvadorans unimpressed by the lure of U.S. capitalist culture, among them Romulo Ramos, a 26-year-old teacher who had spent time working in the U.S. to support his family. (An estimated 800,000 Salvadorans living in Los Angeles for similar reasons were not allowed to vote by absentee ballots.) "As younger people we really need change and we think we don't need to emigrate to the U.S. to get it," Ramos said. "We need to live like human beings." The Salvadoran way of life is "more natural and friendly," he said. "In the U.S. I lived next door to someone for six months. I never knew his name." **TW**

Voters in El Transito, El Salvador, thronged the streets leading to the polls on the morning of the March 20 elections.

Julie A. Wortman

Changing public perceptions

by Tari Susan Hartman

In the last 10 years there has been an emerging recognition that there is a disability culture. As that is realized by people with disabilities and they share their collective experience the public will become more aware.

My own relationship with the disability community began in 1979, when I sustained a temporary disability. I was working with abused kids and got kicked in the jaw. As a consequence I had to wear a cervical collar.

The first time I went on an audition with a cervical collar, the casting director dismissed me unfairly. Angry, I went straight to the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and organized the committee of performers with disabilities. The next 1980 SAG contract was the first that included people with disabilities.

Because television has had an obsession with "curing" people with disabilities, I've worked with others to help the media present more realistic images. While I was executive director of the California Governor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities, we worked with and pressured the entertainment industry to increase employment opportunities and to improve portrayals.

We set up a casting clearing house for performers with disabilities and helped insure accessibility. For example, we asked studios which were casting a blind or deaf character to hire people with disabilities and to make the sides, the part of the script that actors audition from, available in braille or to have sign language interpreters.

For actors using wheel chairs, auditions had to be accessible, *not* held in the parking lot.

We worked with acting coaches and arranged scholarships to train existing talent.

We also presented awards for good work in television, film, advertising, children's programming and literature.

Realizing that writers, producers and directors get their sense of reality from the news media, I established EIN SOF Communications in 1987 as the only marketing, promotion, public relations and production company working exclusively with the disability community. We are now working with members of ADAPT and other organizations to help them get into the news, in addition to trying to influence the entertainment and advertising industry.

We're working with ILRU (Independent Living Resident Utilization) and the Dole Foundation for Employment of People with Disabilities to present the Associated Press with preferred language for the their stylebook which is produced each year as the "Bible" for journalists throughout the world. Language is critical.

Naturally economics has a powerful role. There's a tremendous incentive on the part of nursing home operators to keep people with disabilities segregated and warehoused. Medicaid makes direct payments to nursing homes (you have to get a waiver to live elsewhere). ADAPT is seeking to liberate 1.7 million people from nursing homes and other institutions.

The disability community is struggling now to have an impact on corporations. Unfortunately their relationship has been limited to charitable contributions, so it's hard to get a foot in the door to explain that they're not asking for charity. The corporations' reluctance is just part of society's unwillingness to relinquish stereotypes about people with disabilities.

But we're attempting to demonstrate to them the untapped purchasing power of the disability community which can yield a substantial return on their ADA-related investments, like increasing accessibility. Corporations should invest in sophisticated advertisements targeting this niche market. The ads, in turn, will help change public opinion.

We're currently contacting all the producers of fall shows and suggesting they include people with disabilities in the background. This will provide a subliminal message that the American scene has changed since passage of the ADA and that persons with disabilities are woven through the fabric of our society. TW

Tari Susan Hartman is the owner of EIN SOF Communications. EIN SOF, from Hebrew Scripture, means "without end" and represents the power that may help us to return to wholeness. She is coauthor of *Making News* (Advocado Press, 1994). The icons on this page are available from the **Graphic Artists Guild Foundation**, 11 W. 20th St., 8th floor, New York, N.Y., 10011-3704; (212) 463-7730.

Feminism and disability: mother knows best?

by Anne Finger

Feminism and Disability, by Barbara Hillyer, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, 302 pages, $27.95

Two decades ago, the feminists' proclamation that "The personal is the political" was revolutionary. It demanded that the political was no longer seen only as what happened in the public arena, but also what happened in areas that had formerly been seen as private: not just in legislatures and on the barricades, but also in kitchens and bedrooms. The echoes from that proclamation are still being heard today—not least in the disability rights movement, where problems that had formerly been seen as private and subject to change through psychological adjustment and individual solutions are now acknowledged as ones that need to be addressed socially and politically.

But more recently feminist thinkers have pointed out the difficulties in taking the notion of "the personal is political" uncritically, for a number of reasons. One of them is that we can end up political solipsism — an inability to move beyond one's personal experience and take into account the lives and needs of others. Barbara Hillyer's *Feminism and Disability* (despite its too extensive citations of the works of others) falls into just such a trap. The whole time I was reading this book, I kept sensing the ghost of what could have been a powerful and provocative book haunting the text.

If Hillyer, a non-disabled woman, had written a first-person account of what it means to her as a feminist to find herself raising a disabled daughter — if she had written about her anger, her guilt, her joy, the conflicts that she found within herself and between herself and disability rights activists — this text would have been a valuable and important addition to the growing body of work that explores the conflicts and similarities between the disability rights movement and feminism.

Instead, we get a book that calls itself *Feminism and Disability*, pretending to be in some manner a definitive text, to speak broadly and theoretically. But Hillyer's thinking is sloppy, to put it kindly, and her antagonism to the disability rights movement runs deep. Thus, unfortunately, we get a book that, unless its arguments are answered by disabled feminists and non-disabled feminists who understand what it means to be allies with disabled people, will do real damage to any potential for alliances between feminists and disability rights activists.

Consider, for instance, what Hillyer has to say about the subject of reproductive rights. She patronizingly acknowledges that some disabled women can successfully raise children but then, with language that could have come from the eugenics movement, speaks of "the larger societal problem of persons with seriously impaired judgment *reproducing themselves*."

Marriage gets a scant paragraph. Hillyer writes of "an increasing movement to encourage marriage among retarded people and others formerly considered too handicapped for marriage. ... To advocate marriage for someone whose disability has already defined her as dependent, socially or financially, is then to reinforce that dependence." There's not a word about the outright legal prohibitions against marriage that existed until recently, the deep-rooted repugnance among the non-disabled toward marriage for disabled people.

Hillyer seems not to grasp the most fundamental argument of the disability rights movement: that while impairments may be physical/emotional/mental, disability is a social construct.

The chapter that holds the greatest potential, "Mother-Blaming," is also the most troublesome. She acknowledges that many disabled people feel oppressed by parents as well as professionals, but what she does with this is to make all parents female and then reduce this to "mother-blaming." Our experiences cannot be so lightly dismissed. What does Hillyer make of the studies that show that disabled children are twice as likely to be physically and sexually abused? Hillyer ends up with an outlook that is hardly feminist: instead, it's "motherist." She knows best what her daughter needs, or at least she knows what her daughter doesn't need—disability rights.

For the real analyses of feminism and disability, look instead to works by disabled women: Jenny Morris' *Pride Against Prejudice* (New Society Publishers), the anthology *With the Power of Each Breath* (edited by Browne, Connors,and Stern, published by Cleis Press) and Connie Panzarino's just-published autobiography, *The Me in the Mirror* (Seal Press). TW

book review

Anne Finger is a lecturer in creative writing at Wayne State University and author of *Past Due: A Story of Disability.*

Veronica Robinson

Finding shelter

by Marianne Arbogast

> *Society is not giving us any option but to stay in abusive situations. The primary fear is, if I leave my home which is accessible, there is no place but a nursing home.*

Sixty-five percent of people with disabilities encounter physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, says Veronica Robinson, coordinator of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program at Access Living in Chicago. But although 280,000 disabled persons live in the Chicago area, there is just one fully accessible shelter in the city.

Robinson's own hearing impairment gives her a firsthand awareness of the barriers her clients face. She tells of one client, "a deaf woman with a long history of abuse," who went into a shelter after her boyfriend tried to kill her. But "it was totally inaccessible, not meeting her needs. She went back to her boyfriend and he cut her throat. She's dead.

"The community is not viewing this as a life-and-death situation," Robinson says. "They don't see how many people with disabilities die from domestic violence, how many people with disabilities suffer from their primary caregivers."

A counselor and advocate for disabled women who are victims of abuse, Robinson says that ignoring the needs of women with disabilities locks them into violent situations.

Housing is a critical problem.

"Society is not giving us any option but to stay in abusive situations, because there is no commitment to affordable, accessible housing," she says. "The primary fear is, if I leave my home which is accessible, there is no place but a nursing home. You have agencies that talk about assistance to people with disabilities, but if my client gets $407 from SSI, how is she going to rent an apartment for $425?

"In Chicago, public housing is in high-rises. I don't know how many horror stories I've heard from clients who can't get to their apartments because the elevators don't work, so they sit outside, and again become vulnerable to crime. Some of them first acquired a disability through a traumatic situation or abuse — head injuries, gunshots, stab wounds."

For a disabled person, the logistics of fleeing an abusive home can be daunting.

"I have had clients who have planned escapes, then called the Department of Human Services for transportation assistance. But their policy is that they will not come to the site of the abuse. If my client is a total-care client — quadriplegic or paraplegic — can you explain to me how she is going to get out?"

Those who do leave face formidable obstacles.

"I've had many clients who tried to get emergency medical assistance, and were turned down, not given medical cards, because they hadn't gone through the process of legally separating from their husbands," Robinson says.

"We had a client who was diabetic, a woman with a hearing loss. She got sick and went into the hospital. They had no knowledge of her diabetes, and she died. They did not have an interpreter at any point of her admission into the hospital.

"There are not enough interpreters in courtrooms or in public aid offices. My clients are often told, 'Come back when you can bring someone who can hear.' In fact, the law says it is *their* [the agency's] responsibility to provide interpretive services."

Robinson lost 40 percent of her hearing after a bout with childhood measles. Then, while hospitalized for strep as a college student, she contracted a staph infection and was treated with an antibiotic that induced further, progressive hearing loss.

"I went through a lot of anger and self-pity," she says. "I turned to drugs, I turned to alcohol, and I contemplated ending my life."

She credits her psychlogical recovery to prayer, counseling, and a supportive

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Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness.*

mother. "I began to think, I am a worthwhile person, and I've got something to give."

For a short time, Robinson worked with a state organization which housed people with disabilities.

"I saw a lot of abuse, from drugging them to the extent that all they needed was to be fed and changed, to workers hitting them. I didn't want to be part of that."

One day, she came across a newspaper ad which asked, "Do you feel you would be a strong advocate for women?" Feeling that it was addressed to her, she interviewed for a position at Rainbow House, a shelter for battered women and children. She was hired immediately. Over the next six years, the agency grew from a staff of three and a budget of $75,000 to a staff of 22 and a half-million-dollar budget. Robinson became the program coordinator.

Now 37, Robinson has been working with Access Living for four years. Her hearing has continued to deteriorate, and she is frank about her struggles.

"The past six years have been very difficult. I have had to seek counseling for myself. It's pretty much 12-step: You deny that you're losing your hearing. But when you stop hearing water running in the bathtub, when you see it flooding your house ... when you have the police breaking down your door because your mother has been calling you for days and you can't hear the phone ... when you have a relationship of about 12 years and he says, I can't deal with this ... I've become a much stronger woman and a more persevering person — though a little less patient!"

Robinson is wearied by the prejudice she encounters, tired of people expressing surprise at her competence.

"People say, 'You're so articulate, you're so smart!'

"The myth is that we can't do it. We can't possibly be teachers or engineers or counselors.

"When you have people with disabilities who are both professionals and consumers, you get more for your money. They should hire architects who have disabilities, so when they build ramps and accessible entrances, they get it right the first time. Would you give a white person money and say, we want you to do a cultural program in an African-American neighborhood? You would find the person most qualified in the community and hire them."

Robinson, a member of St. Sabina's Evangelical Catholic Church in Chicago, says that prayer and meditation arm her against "negativism, discriminatory practices, and ignorance." But she sees a need to better educate faith communities around issues of abuse.

"Churches and synagogues should support people more when they make decisions around separation, and not force marital counseling or mediation. When abuse is involved, the individual needs to deal with it alone first, to understand it's not their problem. Then, only if it is the desire of that individual to restore the relationship, they should facilitate that. And not use the bible as a tool to oppress people. That is clearly not what the word of God is about. It's about freedom, not about bondage."

Robinson tries to live "a life of encouragement," to help others move toward freedom. At Access Living, she works with the first deaf women's support group in the country for victims of domestic violence.

"You need somebody to believe in you and walk with you a couple of blocks," she says. "When I see women come from a passive, submissive life of brutality, and see them walk out with head up, shoulders back, with an 'I'm-here-world' kind of attitude — they are few and far between, but when you get one, it lasts a long time." **TW**

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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