

# The Witness

Volume 80 • Number 4 • April, 1997



*Raising kids with conscience*

## Women's ordination

LIKE MANY PEOPLE throughout the Church, I applaud the recent election in the Diocese of Indianapolis. I am glad the people of that diocese had the ability to elect whom they deemed most suited to serve them as bishop, an ability we must not take for granted since it is not present in all dioceses of this Church. However, I am deeply disturbed by the position the Bishop-elect has taken against requiring the equal application of canons pertaining to the ordination of women.

The canonical proposals before General Convention only clarify what already exists. They do not add to the body of canon law. Bishop-elect Waynick states she would likely oppose a resolution in her own diocese making women's access to ordination mandatory. The Church has already spoken on this issue in the canons governing our common life. Title III. Canon 4 states "No one shall be denied access to the selection process for ordination in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by these Canons." Title III. Canon 8. Sec. 1 states "The provisions of the Canons of this Title for the admission of Postulants and Candidates, and for the ordination to the three Orders, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, shall be equally applicable to men and women." What could be more clear?

The four bishops may of course hold a particular theological view on the ordination of women and they have the freedom to exercise conscience. They have not and will not be required to ordain women (another bishop could ordain in their stead — a compromise offered and flatly refused). They have not and will not be required to receive the sacramental ministries of women. There has always been another way as modeled by Bishop Montgomery in Chicago which was commended by the House of Bishops in 1987.

What is crystal clear to me is that while these bishops may use conscience as a shield, they really must not, in conscience, use conscience as a sword, and the Church must not permit this. They may be shielded from having to ordain a woman, but they must not be allowed to penalize an entire diocese, its congregations, its clergy, its men, its women, and its children by preventing women from testing their vocation, by refusing to ordain them, by refusing to license them, or by preventing parishes from calling them solely on account of their sex. The individual conscience of a bishop must not be used to tyrannize an entire diocese. The true exercise of conscience does not inflict pain and damage on others. If conscience is a sensitive regard for fairness and justice, the four bishops' appeal to conscience might be better given

some other name.

Twenty-three years ago, I began the discernment process for ordination as a priest. I never believed I had the right to be ordained or the right to be called to a particular position, but I did believe I had the right, authorized by this Church, to be treated in the same way as my brothers.

At each point along the way, I was considered by virtue of my gifts and skills and what I had to offer the Church, and once ordained, whether I was a priest in good standing. This must be the experience of all women. Fair and consistent consideration should not be an accident of geography. If so in Indianapolis, why not in Fort Worth? If so in Virginia, why not in Eau Claire? If so in Olympia and Ohio, why not in Quincy and San Joaquin?

Like the Bishop-elect, I too pray daily for

## Classifieds

### Position wanted

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### 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.



the conversion of people who oppose women's ordination and I have done so for almost 25 years. I also hold the conviction that there are times when prayer must be buttressed by action of the Church that says the obvious in unequivocal fashion — that all God's children are equal and are to be treated with dignity and respect.

**Gay Jennings**  
Cleveland, OH

### Witness praise

GREAT MAGAZINE — wonderful to connect to Anglican perspectives of Generous Spirit.

**Rosalind Westaway**  
B.C., Canada

WE BOTH ENJOY YOUR MAGAZINE immensely. It keeps us mentally aware of many issues which concern us. Well done!

**Rheta Weidenbacker**  
Philadelphia, PA

YOU KNOW, I THOUGHT I WAS ALONE in my beliefs. [Subscription enclosed.] Thanks for sharing with me.

**Stephanie Anna Maier**  
Gambier, OH

I LOVE *THE WITNESS* and though I don't always agree, it opens my eyes to events that I have never given a thought. Keep the faith and share it too.

**Jacqueline Hansen**  
Grand Junction, CO

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE BEING without *The Witness*. A quotation from a book written by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann's father catalyzed my decision to seek the priesthood 30 years ago. Jeanie's editorials, along with a stream of engaging themes and articles, feed my faith and expand my vision of ministry.

**James T. Elliott**  
Kirkland, WA

### Correction

If you save back issues of *The Witness*, please cross out the last seven lines of Dorothee Sölle's poem in the March issue. They were printed in error.

## Witness announces co-editorship

FOR THE FIRST TIME in its 80-year history, *The Witness* has co-editors! At a recent Episcopal Church Publishing Company board meeting, members voted to support a motion that I made which named Julie A. Wortman co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*. In my view, the change in titles recognizes a welcome and recent change in staff dynamics. For the first time in my six-year tenure, I have another staff member as interested in the whole operation as I am. Julie has opinions about the budget, the printer, the work flow, as well as editorial content. She is willing to help carry responsibility for the magazine's soul and its body.

I am glad for Julie's creativity, vision and irreverence. I've come to truly appreciate the fact that she sees long-term, while I act in a relatively short time-frame. At the same time, I can often push things into being, while she actively considers backup options. Julie is very good at calling out other people's opinions about decisions. Under our new structure, Julie will take more responsibility for planning and production. Hopefully, this arrangement will free me to read other publications and to broaden our scope of vision.

It's important to note that *The Witness'* staff is extremely small. Julie and I work most closely with Marianne Arbogast, who works two days a week, and Marietta Jaeger, who works 35 hours a week. Marianne offers vital contributions to the spirit of the magazine both in her writing and in her editorial input. Marietta interfaces with subscribers, printers, landlords and office machinery, helping to keep everything in motion. In addition, Karen Bota consults with us a couple days a week in an attempt to increase our subscriber base. The other folks listed on the masthead are invaluable, but extremely part-time.

Many of us on the staff were influenced by the series of issues that we did culminating with *Fasting in Babylon: getting the life you want* [12/96].

I was devastated to discover that the

logical trajectory for Julie in this process is moving her household to Maine to live among the Greenfire community this April. But, with the board's approval, we will maintain our working relationship long distance. Technology will both aid and hinder us. I look forward to occasional long walks on the coast she will share with others in Tenants Harbor. And it can only aid *The Witness* to weave the survival efforts of east coast fishermen into the stories of unemployed Detroit auto workers.

While adjusting our organizational structure and making our computers compatible for long-distance work, we decided to also change printers, mail houses and perhaps office buildings (to see whether we could prevent ourselves from living into the lives we want by having massive strokes?).

Generally these days, our emotions lie close to the surface and our physical health and sleep patterns show signs of stress, but we still insist that on the other side is a more contemplative life that will allow for regular exercise, prayer, public witness and thanksgiving. We hope with all our hearts that our lives will begin to move more organically, in accordance with our limits, our gifts, our communities and our vocations.

We pray that it will be so even as we watch the bottom line with some fear, knowing that Bill Spofford's endowment of *The Witness'* work will not last forever. *The Witness*, which has been a feisty word in an often complacent church, will see the year 2,000. Whether it will live into the next century will depend on people's interest in subscribing and donating to the magazine and on God's grace. It is right that this is so.

The co-editors of *The Witness* give thanks for the staff, the subscribers, the board, the contributing editors and Vital Signs advisors. It is a privilege to attempt to speak the truth in a way that recognizes all that is wrong, but upholds hope for the future and confidence in God's word throughout history.

— Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

# The Witness

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**8 Teaching eagles to fly**  
by Ruth Seymour  
*A mother speaks of her struggle to raise strong, self-affirming African American boys in a racist culture.*

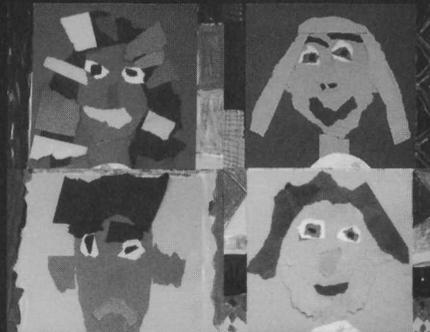
**10 'Icons of white supremacy'**  
by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann  
*Raising blondes in a culture that markets everything from cars to white supremacy with their image produces unexpected struggles in Detroit.*

**12 Complicating the stories:**  
**an interview with Robin Kelley**  
by Jane Slaughter  
*Writer and educator Robin Kelley teaches civil rights history with a twist — the story is never simple.*

**14 Sacrifice: Isaac's view**  
by Erika Meyer  
*Raised in an intentional, sacrificial Christian community, Meyer considers her experience.*

**20 Shaping the future**  
*Elizabeth and Maria Conroy Kaeton share their views on same gender parents and on prejudice.*

**22 The price of peace** by  
Jeanne Heyer  
*Perhaps peace advocates shouldn't mirror military sacrifice in pursuit of peace, says Heyer. Jerry Berrigan sees it differently.*



*Cover: Creating a healthy community, David Fichter, detail of L.A. mural sponsored by the Social and Public Art Resource Center. Courtesy of Syracuse Cultural Workers; catalogues available for \$1, call 315-474-1132.*

*Backcover: Self-portraits by 1st graders at Friends School, Detroit. Collage art under Kristi Bell's supervision. Photographed by Jim West.*

*The Witness* offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish.

- 2 Letters
- 5 Editorial
- 7 Poetry
- 18 Short Takes
- 25 Vital Signs
- 28 Review
- 30 *Witness* profile

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# Sharing values with our kids

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Adults with a responsibility to rear children speak in the first person throughout this issue about decisions they have made in an effort to instill a sense of conscience in their kids. Their social locations and their burning issues vary, but in each case they are searching for a balance that affords children safety and joy as well as a sense of responsibility to confront that which is not right in our world.

Writers in this issue examine ways that race, gender, sexual orientation and peacemaking commitments affect their children. A coherent theme throughout is an appreciation of the beauty and vulnerability of children. The tension is in iden-

tifying how much children can/should bear in the course of struggles for justice. The freedom to ask the question, of course, introduces relative privilege; we recognize that not all families can choose whether to put their kids at risk. But this does not invalidate the question. How do parents and elders know how much to ask of their children?



M.O.R.

As Bill and I thought through these questions in our own family, we realized that in baptizing our children we had committed them to renouncing evil. Speaking and acting in their name, we have signed them up for discipleship. When our daughters come of age, they can discern whether their understanding of vocation and witness will mirror ours. In the meantime, we'll do our best with the help of friends, family and school communities.

It's unlikely that there are any right answers. We learned recently of an Indian reservation where the teen suicide rate was becoming alarming. When church folks considered what to do, the elders did not ask for government programs or radical political action, they asked to reinstitute "hymn sings." They explained to the Episcopal priest that his predecessor had prohibited hymn sings — sessions of song and spontaneous testimony — that the elders believed

could revive the hearts of their youth.

This issue offers some voices that intentionally lean into prevailing views. It becomes more complicated as some writers engage in critiques of viewpoints within their own subcultures — for instance, Jeanne Heyer challenges an ethic she adopted from Daniel Berrigan 15 years ago (p. 22). Her critique from within needs to be read carefully because it rests on some assumptions which may not be shared by all readers. In fact, some readers probably need the original challenge (in this case Berrigan's) more than they need the response. Similarly, on the book review page a black grandmother and a white grandmother's assessment of a new book vary because of their life experiences (p. 29).

We lay all these views before you. We are glad for the variety of communities attempting to address the central question of how we raise kids with conscience and we welcome your responses.

As is mentioned in several of these pieces, how each of us decides to live our lives will affect the children. My clearest sense of what life is meant to be is rooted in my recall of my parents' delight when students, guests from overseas, and the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus came to our table. My siblings and I learned to show respect, to listen through accents, to watch for the glimmer of holiness in simple stories. From my parents' hospitality, I drew conclusions about upside-down gospel values; if they hadn't opened their table, I suppose it wouldn't have mattered much what my father preached from the pulpit. **TW**

editor's note

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Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. Catalogues for M.O.R. Stamps are \$2 (write HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860).

## Dinner at the Advocate!

*The Witness* will hold its General Convention dinner at the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia on July 18. We alert readers now, because we would be delighted for subscribers as well as Deputies and Bishops to join us.

The church, which celebrates its centennial this year, has a long history of advocacy regarding race and gender issues (about which there is more to say in an upcoming issue). Not only will we enjoy the Advocate's hospitality this summer, but we can also make a contribution to its survival, since its gorgeous and elaborate structure is in danger of literally falling down!

# O.J. and white supremacy

by Eugene Rivers

**T**he O.J. trial demonstrates the racial divide. As the decision came down on that fateful day, black women and white women were *not* together. What happened for many black women, is not that they loved O.J. What was deep in the black community is that, as one black woman pointed out, “Had Nicole been black, there would have been no story.”

In the black community — in the barbershops, in the bars, far removed from the white overseers, where we could be honest and talk the truth — we said to ourselves, “Boy, these folk ain’t no good. I mean, there’s a boy Kennedy, in a car, driving from a party, drunk, not with his wife, car goes over the bridge into the water. He gets out, first thing he does is call a lawyer. *Then* he calls the hospital. And not only does he not go to jail, he gets reelected and becomes a credible candidate for the presidency.”

O.J.’s crime is that he did what white boys do and, like them, he can pay to get off. What inflames it is that he was accused of murdering the icon of white supremacy.

The church was no less divided than America. The blood of Christ was not heavy enough, not deep enough, to bridge the chasm when the deal went down.

So we need to discern and exorcise the principality, the demonic spirit, that divides the church and the entire national experience: white identity.

Where did this mythological, powerful symbolic construction come from?

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**Eugene Rivers** is pastor of the Azusa Christian Community in Boston, Mass. This essay is adapted from a talk he gave at the May, 1996 Stringfellow conference in Lexington, Va., which was co-sponsored by *The Witness*.

How did you, not being white, not coming from a land called “White,” become white? Where did this construction come from and how did it assume the force it has? It splits the country in two and is now poised to generate civil war in the U.S.

Two hundred years ago, you were Irish or German or Scottish, but at some point, you were sold a bill of goods that you were not simply Irish but *white*.

Being Irish makes sense. You can talk about Irish culture, German culture, Scottish culture. But there is no white culture. This ideological construction was demonically inspired.

Here we are today, stuck with rebellion everywhere, because that white thing has collapsed on itself. The crackers are saying, “You all told me if I was a white man, there would be a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.” These boys got a level of fury that’s scaring y’all.

I empathize with those white boys, because they’ve been lied to. They ain’t wrong. They might be illegal, but them boys ain’t wrong.

The church now is in a unique position to be the church of Jesus Christ for the first time. But you are either going to be the church or you’re going to be white, apostate, and usher in apartheid! It’s going to be war. Blood’s going to run in the streets for real.

You got the white militia coming hard and you got Louis Farrakhan on the other side. Both of these phenomena are poetic justice. You get what your religion deserves.

Farrakhan has flipped that Christian thing on its head. As much as Farrakhan makes me sick, I can’t jump on the boy too bad. Farrakhan says, “There ain’t no

Christianity in America. It’s the old white tribal religion, the white warrior God.”

We are in a dangerous place. And it’s idolatrous. The thing about this white racist ideology is that it is the most pernicious form of sin because it’s based on pride. God can deal with a thief, deal with a liar, deal with David messing around with Sheba, but child please don’t get arrogant, proud and idolatrous. Pride is an ideology and a conception of identity which is against God in its essence.

White racism, white supremacy is so demonically entrenched that people would rather waste money than invest in social programs which could alleviate suffering and be more cost effective. Oh, it’s deep.

I’m suggesting that a radical conversion to biblical faith frees us from the burden of the demonic spirit which now binds us and renders us unable to live as rational human beings. All of you are going to be speaking in tongues before this is over — you will need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to even know how to construct this conversation.

We’re talking about 300 years of history developing this thing that is so deeply entrenched in the cultural psychology of the nation and the church. We’re talking about a roaring lion of white supremacy. It is violent and it can only be dealt with in the most discerning way. We’re talking about God, who gives the church the power to discern how to exorcise a level of violence and irrationality that is caving this country in on itself.

Those of us who consider ourselves progressive are going to be forced to levels of prayer and contemplation that we haven’t assumed were central, because this is more dangerous than anything else we have undertaken. God is calling us to be his people. He’s calling us to turn our backs on the idols, to turn our backs on any conception of reality which elevates the creature over the creator. We must pray as a political act of resistance.

**TW**

## Tour 5

by Robert Hayden

The road winds down through autumn hills  
in blazonry of farewell scarlet  
and recessional gold,  
past cedar groves, through static villages  
whose names are all that's left  
of Choctaw, Chickasaw.

We stop a moment in a town  
watched over by Confederate sentinels,  
buy gas and ask directions of a rawboned man  
whose eyes revile us as the enemy.

Shrill gorgon silence breathes behind  
his taut civility  
and in the ever-tautening air,  
dark for us despite its Indian summer glow.  
We drive on, following the route  
of highwaymen and phantoms,

Of slaves and armies.  
Children, wordless and remote,  
wave at us from kindling porches.  
And now the land is flat for miles,  
the landscape lush, metallic, flayed,  
its brightness harsh as bloodstained swords.

**Robert Hayden** was born in 1917.

This month's poem marks the completion of Leslie Williams' year as poetry editor for *The Witness*. We are grateful for her contributions, and we congratulate her on the release of her new book, *Night Wrestling: Struggling for Answers and Finding God* (Word Publishing, 1997).



## Eagles & chickens

**P**erched by a great king's throne was an eagle. Each day she would soar through the clouds. The people would look up with pride.

But one year the kingdom was overthrown. The people were enslaved and the eagle captured. Before her death, she laid three eggs which were placed in a chicken yard. When they hatched, all of the chickens laughed. "Oh my! Big old heads! Stubby little necks! What ugly chickens!" The eaglets began to droop.

A year passed. Then a captured eagle was tossed into the barnyard. He was hurt but he flapped his wings incessantly. The chickens laughed. "What are you doing, you dumb, ugly chicken? Chickens can't fly!"

"I am not dumb or ugly and I am not a chicken," responded the eagle. "Eagles were born to soar."

A few roosters were incensed by this chicken's bad attitude, and pecked at the eagle until he was bloodied. But one morning the chickens found the great eagle perched atop the barnyard fence.

A young eagle who believed himself a chicken said quietly, "Please come down from there or you'll get us all in trouble."

"My brothers, come with me," said the great eagle with power and authority. Two of the young eagles rose into the air. The last young eagle, however, still hugged his big wings close to his sides. The great eagle knew that this brother's young spirit had been corrupted before it could grow strong. "I will pray for you, my brother," the great eagle said. "Your real destiny is in the skies."

# Teaching eagles to fly

by Ruth Seymour

**M**y children have heard a long version of this story several times. I'm glad. It has been circulating for years among African American educators and storytellers. It shows up in urban classrooms and in the Sunday schools of the black church—for obvious reasons. Here is a tale about physical difference as positive, about self-definition in the midst of cultural oppression, and with an over-ground railroad. It's "The Ugly Duckling" with Harriet Tubman and African kingdoms thrown in for good measure.

But those chickens.

Raising two African American boys in this predominantly Euro-commercial culture, I often feel like an old black-and-white film clip of Dorothy's aunt in *The Wizard of Oz*. I'm non-stop bustling around the henyard in a small protective circle, shooing away pesky chickens with my broom—just trying to hold open some small time and space in which my little eagles can grow big enough to know and defend themselves, or just laugh and fly away.

Chickens.

When my first child was a baby, and just old enough to respond with giggles and hand waves to the oversized humans around him, the chicks started hatching.

A European American neighbor, whom we had known for a half-dozen years, cooed at our baby and then popped

up with: "Hey, Niles, gimme five."

He said it in some kind of jive voice I had never heard from him, and I felt the unexpected soft slap: After all these years of book chats, intellectual exchange and neighborliness, this gentleman didn't see my beautiful Niles; he saw a black baby.

It was Niles' first brush with a chicken, at least in my presence. But over the years, I watched the "Gimme five!" chicken surface at unexpected moments for both of my boys, coming always from slightly nervous and friendly European American adults.

No big deal. But now that Niles is 10, and watching the phenomenon with his preschool brother, I bet he can already sense the oddness, and recognize the moment for what it likely is—a tiny peck of involuntary prejudice. Just a little moment of, "You're different. I'm nervous." Just a tiny, little peck.

That's a chicken. An invalidating, depersonalizing, but otherwise insignificant moment.

It's just that there are so many of them.

But an eagle! Now that is something else.

That is antidote,

*better* than antidote. An eagle is the intoxicant of truth. It is a moment or person that makes all chickens look really silly. One good eagle can take care of hundreds of chickens more effectively than years of eager swatting with a broom. The mere shadow of a swooping eagle reduces hundreds of cackling chickens to obvious impotence. A few words from an eagle can help us dare to flap and climb.

*Chicken: Something wrong with us*

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*One good eagle can take care of hundreds of chickens more effectively than years of eager swatting with a broom.*

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**Ruth Seymour** teaches journalism at Wayne State University in Detroit and raises Niles and Kahlil with the help of their dad, Kim Heron.

*made us slaves.*

*Eagle: Moses and the children of Israel.*

One of the first Bible stories I told my older son was of Moses and the Israelites in bondage. We spent a *long* time in Egypt with God's chosen people, thinking about what they built (and with bricks of straw!), and of the fact that they were helpless to protect themselves. The books we read showed powerful, gold-adorned, brown-bodied Pharaohs.

Then the books told of the whole power of God that helped a stuttering Moses speak, rained frogs on kings, parted deep water with invisible hands and led the children of Israel into their heritage and freedom.

Before anyone else told my son about field slaves and bloodhounds, I wanted him to know slavery as, unfortunately, universally human. To be a slave is not the historical property of black Americans, nor is the capacity to oppress the property of whites.

Over the course of history, we have all been eagles and we have all been chickens. We're all in good company.

Today is the question: Will my kids choose to be eagles or chickens?

*Chicken: Images of African American kids on TV.*

It's Friday night and Niles is watching "Clueless." It is an inane teenage sitcom, and his near-favorite. The two African-American teen boys always wear bright, silly clothes and huge fuzzy hats. (The Euro-American kids are faddish but essentially elegant.) I walk by, and yell at the TV screen:

"Why are you dressing those handsome young men like that? Why are just the *black* kids dressing like that?"

My preteen son sighs. "Mom, that is *cool*. That is what is *in*. They look *good*."

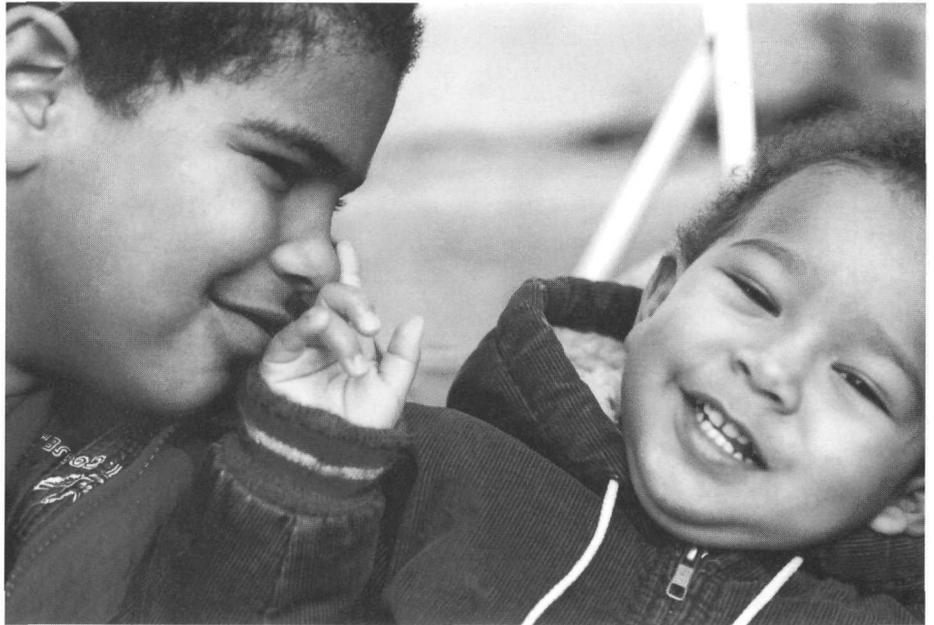
At this point the chickens are way too fast for my broom.

*Eagle: Large and ordinary heroes.*

One of my mom's friends recently complained that kids today don't have heroes and heroines — everyone famous is tarnished. Another friend just said, "Well, then, I guess it's up to us to be their heroes."

I, for one, think Mandela is holding up magnificently as straight-out hero material. But perhaps the best part of the Eagle and Chickens fable *is* its insistence on the

gentle father stand up to riot police and semi-trucks. In the next months he saw families of all occupations and races trying to help each other, and some families who were not even a part of the unions working to organize rallies and support groups. He saw friends, and parents of his school friends, arrested. By age 10, he eagerly sold strike newspapers on street corners and to strangers at labor conven-



**Niles and Kahlil**

eagle within, along with its suggestion that God will not leave any of us stranded forever in a chicken yard. We can *always* count on some eagle arriving out of the blue and telling us to start flapping.

In our family, the eagle came in the form of a strike. For the last 20 months, my husband and a couple thousand other newspaper workers in Detroit have been on strike against both Gannett and Knight-Ridder: two mega-giant companies.

For the strikers, this was a question of union-busting. But Niles was just nine years old. He wept in fear when we told him that Dad was about to go on strike. In the next days Niles saw his own very

tions. He continued to go uncomplainingly in old shoes and without school hot lunches.

There was an eagle flapping inside our child. My husband and I look at this son, and are genuinely amazed. We have to admit that these hard months have made him stronger and more confident than we ever could have invented ways to support on our own. Which suggests that, one more time, maybe God really does know, even better than we do, how to grow yet another good and strong-souled black man.

I bet He'll send an eagle down after the preschooler, too.

**TW**

# ‘Icons of white supremacy’

By Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

*“White women are oppressed — you spend your life distorting yourself to conform to some white supremacist image, so you can’t function right. Your brain ain’t straight. Women are imposed upon to distort their natural being to conform to a politically oppressive and demonic construct that not only damages white women, but destroys the self-identity of millions of other women. Black women get bleaching creme and do all kinds of things to themselves to conform to a demonic conception of identity.*

*“The whole notion of white beauty which drives the culture is the multi-million dollar business of white supremacy in the most violent way.”*

— Eugene Rivers

**M**y kids have been raised to sing outside the gates of defense contractors. They have watched people, including their Dad, get arrested during prayerful protests. They have climbed wood piles by strikers’ fire barrels and made up clapping games to the political chants they hear.

They understand in their bones the meaning of social location. In Detroit, when very little, they asked about the “broken houses,” the charred, gutted homes that stand on every block in this city where 6,000 homes a year are bulldozed in the aftermath of the flight to the suburbs. When we visited an affluent area when Lydia was three, she asked, “Do these people know how lucky they are?”

Raising them, we have watched the plumbline and tried to ensure that their participation in the risks we take was not invading their dreams or destroying their faith in the goodness of life. Our thinking

was that at their baptism when we made promises to renounce evil, we made these promises for them until the day that they can choose for themselves. This implicates them in the forms of resistance that we have chosen: urban living, nonviolent witness against militarism and corporate abuse, as well as occasional hospitality to people who sometimes drag spectres of nightmares along with them.

Our kids also get their share of days on the beach and they are surrounded by a community of folks who know how to sing and write poetry and throw themselves down sledding hills with abandon.

We have recently, however, been blindsided. And I have found myself ill-equipped to deal with a major challenge that faces them in this most segregated urban area in the nation.

White liberal ideology and training made us unable, for years, to acknowledge even to ourselves that our kids were

often excluded at their Detroit schools because they are white. At the same time that they reported being discriminated against, they were learning in school and at home about the oppressive role white people

have played in our national history. It began to appear that, despite some of their actual experiences, the adults in their lives believed that people of color could do no wrong and white people were always in a position to apologize.

By the time Lydia was seven, she was in agony. She used to slam into her closet and cry when she came home from public

school. In class, kids would cluster around her and stroke her hair and she managed the unasked-for attention, but on the schoolbus she was regularly insulted for being white by several kids, including the driver’s granddaughter.

Ironically, moving our daughters to a private school committed to justice concerns only reinforced the mistake we were making at home. Classes in civil rights mentioned a few white folks who acted heroically for justice, but the conversations were not broad enough to suggest that African Americans could ever be powerful or act wrongly. Meanwhile, all the schoolchildren were painfully aware of white people’s involvement in the decimation of Indian communities, slave trade, lynchings and ongoing racism.

In skits about Rosa Parks, our kids each had repeated opportunities to tell their black classmates to go to the back of the bus. One can only imagine how their early elementary school classmates felt about them and how my daughters felt about themselves.

There was never a point of validation for Lydia’s and Lucy’s experiences liv-

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*White liberal ideology made us unable to acknowledge even to ourselves that our kids were often excluded at their Detroit schools because they are white.*

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ing in a black dominant city where white skin is often greeted with hostility at city pools or grocery stores.

My daughters are blonde-haired, blue-eyed kids. In their bodies they represent the

“icons of white supremacy” that Eugene Rivers speaks of. Through no choice of their own, they are a visible symbol of “them that gets.”

Only in the last year, though, have I learned to open my mouth in their defense. I am fighting now to find a place for them to stand.

I’ve pondered the experiences of black

parents who had to send their kids to predominantly white schools — how did they encourage self-respect in their kids? Part of what they did was prepare their kids for the hatred and rejection many would turn on them because of their skin color. They taught their children that those who show race hatred are dangerous and *wrong*. They counselled their kids to take their educations and rise up. They retold stories about the strength of their ancestors who resisted and survived.

From their example, we have finally realized that we need to teach our children about slavery in the context of world history — a devastatingly cruel system based on power and wealth, not solely skin color. We are starting to teach them about their Irish and Scottish ancestors who left their homelands after land was ripped from them, who travelled on ships in which at least 20 percent of the passengers died, who arrived here as indentured servants.

I still feel a little crazed sorting this out: I'm not asking for revisionist history; I know our kids have to learn that the overarching reality today is a white racist structure. I'm not excusing historic or current atrocities. But I've come to understand that a breadth of history is necessary. My kids need to understand that people with light skin have not always and in all circumstances wielded power and that Africans and Native Americans have not always been victims or incapable of wrong doing. My work in this area is not aided by the response of some friends, white liberal parents, who suggest that the only problem is me. I feel more hope in conversation with the parents of Lucy's African American classmates. It isn't easy for us to trade viewing points, but we do agree that it is not good for our children to be cast as simply victim or oppressor.

When Lucy, now 7, came home this month describing a skit in which she was

separated by race and gender and in which her African American classmates were told to work harder in the fields, I had the clarity to tell her I was angry; asking the kids to act out the skit was wrong. Her affect improved immediately. "It just makes fights," she said, adding that (understandably) one of her classmates had turned toward her, saying, "White people are poison."



Lydia and Lucy

I am optimistic that the school will make some changes.

In the meantime, I know that I will. My kids will learn that their ancestors loved Scotland and Ireland and left only because they could not find a way to stay and live. Some of these same ancestors were directly involved in stealing Indian land. One apparently owned slaves. Some were Quaker abolitionists. And others, I believe, were Indian and African American themselves.

I hope that we are beginning to do what many African Americans, including Eugene Rivers, have been urging white folks to do — to give up their "white" identities for real ethnic ones. I get nervous, because "white guilt" is so familiar to me that I don't know what all the implications of shedding it may be. But for starters, I want my daughters to understand how complicated our nation's

and their families' histories are. They'll need to work at rejecting white privilege and the privilege/oppression that can come to those who look like the "icons of white supremacy."

We will continue to try to demonstrate ways to work to change our society, but we'll also encourage them not to be passive in the face of undue hostility. They can stand their ground and take pride in who they are. They'll be taught to expect the respect their humanity deserves. **TW**

# Complicating the stories: an interview with Robin Kelley

by Jane Slaughter

*Robin D.G. Kelley teaches about the history of black working class people at New York University. He is the author of Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class (1994) and the forthcoming Don't Talk About My Mama! Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America. He writes and researches from the standpoint that black history is not complete without the stories of how black people buck racism in myriad daily acts of resistance, outside of formal organizations or movements. He is co-editor of a new 11-volume series for young readers that he calls "subversive": The Young Oxford History of African Americans. He wrote the final volume, Into the Fire: African Americans Since 1970, in which he explores the best and worst of contemporary life, from hip-hop to black intellectuals. Thirty-four-year-old Kelley lives in New York City with his wife, painter Diedra Harris-Kelley, and their six-year-old daughter. In the dedication to Race Rebels, he writes, "To my two best friends, Diedra and Elleza, who taught me more about resistance than I ever cared to know." The Witness asked Kelley what he's learned about raising a young African American resistance fighter.*

**Jane Slaughter:** What are the obstacles to raising children of conscience?

**Robin Kelley:** Other than the outside world?

That's a hard question, because I find the irony, at least here in New York City,

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**Jane Slaughter** is a freelance writer in Detroit, Mich.

is that the more privileged you are, the easier it is. It's a very strange situation. My daughter goes to a really good public grade school where social justice is just part of the curriculum. They take the kids



**Robin Kelley**

on field trips and teach them about social justice. They have parents who devote a lot of time to the school. If I say I'm going to go into my daughter's classroom and give a presentation around social justice, they let me do it.

The other thing about being relatively privileged, living downtown in Greenwich Village: She doesn't see injustice on a day to day basis. No, I take that back. Actually she does. We're surrounded by homeless people, we're surrounded by police officers that are always stopping black people in the streets.

She witnesses that. It's not a matter of life and death for her. It's just something she observes.

**J.S.:** If it's not part of your own life to have to fight for something ...

**R.K.:** ... it becomes almost like a hobby. We tell her about ourselves growing up in Harlem and she can't believe that we were poor. She has no conception of that at all.

But we can't get away with anything, whether it's about the environment or about racism and sexism. My daughter's always on her p's and q's.

Now there are other barriers. One is the crass materialism that just dominates this culture. My daughter doesn't watch television, and not watching television has been fantastic for shielding her from certain things.

**J.S.:** Besides sending her to this school, what do you and Diedra do to try to get the social justice messages across?

**R.K.:** We take her to a lot of places. We take her to talks. She's heard Cornel West lots of times, Angela Davis, Toni Morrison. We go to poetry readings. She's very into the visual arts. The shows we see are often shows where the pieces are about social justice, and we have conversations about it.

If something comes up that's kind of retrograde, we talk about it. She's into Barbies, so when *The Nation* had an issue with Barbies on the cover, she wanted to know what it was about.

Reading about the terrible working conditions of the people who make Barbies kind of opened her eyes. It didn't convince her to get rid of her Barbies, but it kind of convinced her that maybe she shouldn't buy any more.

We're constantly talking to her, but the thing I'm afraid of is — you can't impose too much on her because then she'll become a neoconservative.

**J.S.:** Sometimes I wonder if by constantly taking our children to meetings where they sit in the back of the room with a book, or dragging them to picket lines, we're creating resentment, a backlash against politics.

**R.K.:** Once in a while we take her to

demonstrations and rallies, but we don't do a whole lot of that. In fact I have cut down a lot on my own speaking and traveling just to be home. I think it's more effective to be home and able to converse and play than it is to go for massive exposure. There's got to be a balance between exposure to things and having some time to reflect.

But Elleza takes this stuff very seriously. Here's an example.

For the King holiday, I went into her class and talked about Dr. King and what he represented. I asked them, "What would each one of you do to continue King's legacy?" Elleza's idea was to start a newspaper about King's ideas. All the kids in the class would write articles about what they've seen and what they're doing and what they've learned.

And the second thing she would do is lead a sit-in in the White House. She drew this picture where her class is all sitting in the Oval Office and Hillary is tapping Bill on the shoulder saying, "You've got to do something, boy." The kids have a big banner saying, "Give the homeless what they need."

**J.S.:** How did you talk to the kids about King's ideas?

**R.K.:** The two things I emphasized were that the vision King had of social justice was not one limited to black people, nor was it limited to the United States — it was a global sort of vision. I demonstrated why emancipation in the south could transform all of the country and the world.

**J.S.:** Was that hard to do for six-year-olds?

**R.K.:** I played games with them; I created stories about children. By putting them in different spaces, we showed how segregation didn't equally oppress white people, but it did limit their mobility and movement and relationships — even as children. I talked about why King took a position against the Vietnam war.

We talked about why a war across the Pacific Ocean could have this huge impact on little children in the United States, and who really benefits from that. Then we talked about war, and that war is not just a mistake; war is about making some money for people, but not for everybody. These are brilliant little kids.

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*You can't be afraid as an educator or as a parent to complicate the stories. There are different stories and they contradict each other.*

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**J.S.:** Were you concerned with how to get the message across without leaving the impression that all white people are bad?

**R.K.:** That's exactly what I had to do, because Elleza is the only African American child in her class.

In a school that's 50 percent black and Latino, in the special program for gifted and talented that she's in, she is the only black child. It's difficult for her; she's always the one who's looked to, to have all the experience and knowledge of black people *in the first grade*.

When I did this game, the white kids weren't necessarily white; they were whatever I assigned to them. I emphasized that everyone who participated in this movement for social justice for African Americans wasn't black. There were white people involved. Was it because they just felt sorry for black people? That's part of it. But part of it was because many of these white people recognized that the movement was also for their own liberation, their ability to treat all people with humanity.

Racism is the result of people not knowing. It's the result of a certain *kind* of knowledge that's imposed on people.

The trick is, how do you reverse that knowledge so that white people don't have to see themselves as just white? Or believe that they're better than anyone else because they have certain privileges? Because when they don't achieve in that framework — there's enormous pressure — they feel like even a greater failure than people of color who are expected not to achieve. Whiteness itself is both a mark of privilege and a mark of oppression.

And if they allow their skin to dominate them instead of trying to break out of it — one way to break out is to participate in movements against racism — they'll never feel really comfortable with themselves.

There's a cost to identifying yourself as a white person only, and not fighting against racism.

Second, not all white people are bad. Many white people who are silent on the matter are silent out of fear and intimidation. I shared with them some of my own research, from *Race Rebels*. There were some white people who went to the back of the bus, and sat and were arrested or ejected because they wouldn't move from the back of the bus. Who were these people, what were they about, what movements were they a part of?

This was shocking to the kids, to hear that white people were arrested.

It's too complicated to reduce to "white people are bad and black people are good."

With kids, you can't be afraid as an educator or as a parent to complicate the stories. I'm always doing that with Elleza. She's sometimes frustrated, but she doesn't ever allow one story to be the dominant story.

Every time they think they understand it, throw something at them that makes them think, well, maybe that's not really the case.

There are all these different stories and they contradict each other. **TW**

# Sacrifice: Isaac's view

by Erika Meyer

*Some years later the Lord decided to test Abraham, so he spoke to him.*

*Abraham answered, "Here I am Lord."*

*The Lord said, "Go get Isaac, your only son, the one you dearly love! Take him to the land of Moriah, and I will show you a mountain where you must sacrifice him to me on the fires of an altar" (Genesis 22:1-2).*

I was sitting in the seminary library. I needed to focus on my work for theology class. Instead, a sense of heaviness pervaded me, a gravity that over the semester had become insistent. I was tired of it and wanted to know what was wrong with me. On the desk sat a clean piece of notebook paper. I decided to draw a picture — perhaps my psyche might throw me a bone of insight. First came a stick-figure priest and an altar table and then a second stick person. This figure was a girl. She lay across the altar. I recoiled at the thought that the girl on the altar was a sacrifice, but it was too late; my insight had come.

*A girl of 13 with a big imagination. She reads books about the ghetto. She wants to be a gangleader's girlfriend. She wants to smoke pot and make out like the characters do in The Cross and the Switchblade before the gang members repent and get saved. Of course it is sad to say good-bye to her friends. Her leaving is melodramatic, her girlfriends cry for her, even some boys promise to write. She is riding high.*

It was the new year 1977. My father and mother and the two younger children

were preparing the house for sale in Ohio. My older brother and I were already in Detroit. I had arrived early to start school with the new semester. For the time being, I was living with Larry and Carolyn Strayhorn and their six kids. I remember the middle child voicing her embarrassment at having a white girl move in with them, but the older girls were friendly.

*And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people (Acts 2:44-47a).*

The Strayhorns were members of the church my parents had decided to join. The Church of the Messiah, a product of the charismatic movement of the 1970s, was different from most Episcopal churches: Many of its members lived communally, inspired by the description of the early church in the second chapter of Acts.

There were roughly 100 people, counting children, that were living "in community." Community members lived in nine large homes. My family would become part of a household in the vicinity of the church. The church also ran an elementary school which was open to the neighborhood. The older children and teenagers fed into the public school system.

*There are three other eighth graders from church at her new middle school. They seem very young to her. They surprise her on her first day of school by praying together in the carpool. They are clearly goody-two-shoes and she will steer clear of them.*

*Her new classmates mistake her for a substitute teacher. She sits in wonder at the constant mayhem of her homeroom. The real teacher, a tiny black woman, arrives. At the front of the room, she yells for order, finally gives up. The noise is an assault; the class will always be more or less out of control. There are no Messiah kids with her. She had thought that was what she wanted. She knows that she is in over her head; she waits to cry until after school when she is alone.*

Maybe if I had not been so intent on proving that I was 13 going on 18, I would have talked to someone. The idea that I could handle a situation was a shock to me. But I had embraced the role of the rebellious "p.k." (preacher's kid) with gusto and I would not deign to talk to my parents or anyone else. At the same time, my father was the measure of all things to

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*In the midst of all that was good, the teenagers had to deal with some overwhelming situations involving issues of race, class and sex that the Messiah community had not yet begun to name.*

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me; I admired his decision to move the family to Messiah and I wanted to be tough for him.

*The rumors and threats start in the first weeks. She is supposed to be a prostitute. She has had a baby. The girls in*

*her class call her "rich bitch." A group of them say they are going to cut off her hair in the bathroom. Someone wants to fight her. But true mortification hits when a white lady math teacher pulls her aside to lecture her about her reputation; she is speechless with the teacher. She tells no*

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**Erika Meyer** is a *Witness* contributing editor and Episcopal priest living in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Messiah's youth group in 1977. Erika Meyer is in the back row, third from the left.

*one what is happening at school.*

The life at Messiah held lots of appeal for me. I loved the high-energy folk music in our worship and our commitment to simple living. I loved eating rice and beans and finding clothes at the thrift shop. I loved singing grace around the dinner table; even sharing a bedroom with four people in it was fine with me. Probably the same things that would be attractive about any Amish or Mennonite community were present at Messiah. In many ways we were a Spirit-filled community like the one described in Acts.

But in the midst of all that was good, I believe the teenagers had to deal with some overwhelming situations in school and on the buses and on the streets. Situations involving issues of race, class and sex that the Messiah community had not yet begun to name; issues that can still, 20 years later, overwhelm and silence me.

My worst times in Detroit were in those first months; my high school experience the next year was a big relief. I attended a magnet high school for the whole city, which meant a more integrated and middle-class environment. I still had to navigate the buses and streets but at least in school I did not feel like a

target for racial and class hostility.

But beneath the relative peace of high school and burrowed under my feelings about Messiah, was the image of Isaac, the image of a child offered as a sacrifice for his father's faith. Part of me understood my experience in this way, and years later the image of sacrifice was still there pressing for recognition.

Without Isaac surfacing in me, I could not have known to climb down from the altar. Climbing down has meant engaging my siblings and others about their experiences and finally telling my parents about the hardships I faced in our move to Messiah. It has also meant writing my story to hold up the often unspoken and unknown costs of discipleship borne by children and teenagers.

*Sacrifice* need not be a dirty word when children are concerned; but the *intended* sacrifice a parent or community asks of a child may not be the *actual* sacrifice that the child takes on. Our own ideals may make our children vulnerable to harm which is unknown to us. By all means let us make sacrifices together, but with care and discernment so that our children do not end up feeling that they have become the sacrifice. **TW**

## Back issues

### Spirituality

- Africa, come spirit come, 6/95
- Alternative ways of doing church, 8-9/94
- Grieving rituals, 3/97
- Silence, 1/96
- "Be ye perfect," 3/93
- Staying in my denomination, 10/94
- When the church engages rage, 12/92
- Women's spirituality, 7/94
- Birthing in the face of a dragon 12/91

### The physical

- Body wisdom, 5/95
- Disabilities, 6/94
- Godly sex, 5/93
- Glamour, 11/94

### On the earth

- Resurrecting land, 4/95
- In defense of creation, 6/93
- Resisting sprawl: the hope of bioregionalism, 10/95

### Allies

- Dialogue, 4/94
- The communion of saints/ancestors, 11/93
- Family history, 7/96
- American faces of Islam, 5/96

### Money and class

- In need of a labor movement, 9/96
- The Christian Right, 10/96
- Fasting in Babylon, 12/96
- In the church's interest, 3/96
- Economic justice, 5/94
- Money, 3/92
- Jubilee economics, 1/97

### Ethics

- Is it ever okay to lie?, 4/96
- Christians and animal rights, 10/93

### Family values

- Holy matrimony, 12/95
- Family values, 12/94

### Government

- The New Party, 11/95
- Hiroshima and nonviolence, 7/95
- Caesar and the widows and orphans, 4/93
- Hospitals, 6/96
- International youth in crisis, 7-8/93

# Reaching for resources

by Karen D. Bota

**T**hese resources may be helpful to families who are discussing and looking for creative ways to deal with a number of complex justice issues.

## Racism

*Colors of Harmony* (5767 Foser Rd., Bainbridge Island, WA 98110; 800-283-5659) offers a variety of multi-cultural resources such as books, toys and other educational items through catalog sales.

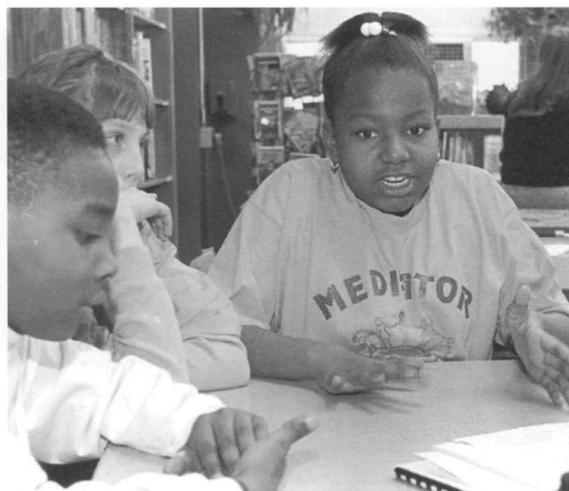
*Different and Wonderful: Raising Black Children in a Race-Conscious Society* by Dr. Darlene Powell Hopson and Dr. Derek S. Hopson, Fireside.

*Teaching Tolerance: Raising Open-Minded, Empathetic Children* by Sara Bullard, editor of *Teaching Tolerance* (a magazine for educators, published by the Southern Poverty Law Center, with resources and ideas for promoting respect for diversity). She includes suggested family activities, organizational listings, recommended reading and other resources.

*Center for Healing Racism* (P.O. Box 27327, Houston, TX 77227; 713-738-7223) provides publications and workshops for community groups.

*Race, Rage and Family: What Do We Tell the Children?* is a special report published by *Parenting Magazine* (307 Howard St., 17th floor, San Francisco, CA 94105).

*The Values Library Series*, published by the Rosen Publishing Group (800-237-9932) for secondary school students, bolsters cooperation, tolerance, self-esteem, citizenship and compassion. The *Coping With: Facing Challenges* series helps young people confront bias, verbal abuse, discrimination, cross-cultural and



Carolina Kroon/Impact Visuals

Conflict resolution with 4th and 5th graders in NYC.

interracial relationships, sexual orientation and a bigoted parent.

## Peace and nonviolence

*Children's Defense Fund* (202-628-8787) produces a variety of curricula, activity books, materials for youth and children's books related to justice issues.

*Children's Creative Response to Conflict* (Box 271, 521 N. Broadway, Nyack, NY 10960) develops programs, a newsletter, and other resources for teachers and parents.

*Making the Peace*, an innovative 15-session violence prevention curriculum for young people developed by the Oakland Men's Project. Also available: *Days of Respect: Organizing a Schoolwide Violence Prevention Program* and *Helping Teens Stop Violence*. For ordering information call 800-266-5592.

*Parenting for Peace and Justice Network* at the Institute for Peace and Justice (4144 Lindell Blvd., Room 124, St. Louis, MO 63108; 314-533-4445) provides workshops and video training, a newsletter and many resources for families seeking wholeness, peace and justice. Local PPJN coordinator can help form and nurture local family

support groups.

*Peacemaking in the Home* workshop includes singing, training in conflict resolution, dealing with anger, setting up family meetings, and prayer. New: *Families Creating a Circle of Peace*, a booklet by the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network/Parenting for Peace and Justice, addresses the concerns of parents and others who want to take a stand for peace and against violence. Includes 40 pages of stories, suggestions, activities and resources to help families live out their pledge. E-mail: ppjn@aol.com.

*Peacemaker Training Institute at the Fellowship of Reconciliation* (P.O. Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960; 914-358-4601) trains youth 17-25 who are seeking to create nonviolent alternatives in society to become more effective peace and justice advocates. E-mail: fornatl@igc.apc.org.

*Episcopal Church Children's Ministries Cluster* (212-922-5212) has created the Children Against Violence Project. Available resources for home or Sunday School include *Treasure Magazine: Kids for Peace — Making a Non-Violent USA*, for children ages 5-13. A leader's guide is available.

*Urban Family Magazine*, a source of hope and progress for today's African American Christian, is online. Reach their Website at <http://www.netdoor.com/com/ronline/uf>. The current issue contains an article on raising nonviolent children in a violent world.

*Youth in Peacemaking*, published by the ELCA with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, addresses nonviolence, justice and related themes. Call the ELCA (800-328-4648 — ask for #69-9946) or Presbyterian Church USA (800-524-2612 — ask for #DMS 259-92-917).

## Gender

*In Amazing Grace*, Dial Books for Young Readers, Grace is a young African American girl who, with the encouragement of her mother and grandmother, holds on to her belief that she can be anything she wants to be, despite others telling her she can't.

*The National Women's History Project*, (7738 Bell Rd., Dept. P, Windsor, CA 95492,

**Karen D. Bota** is promotion consultant at *The Witness*.

707-838-6000) promotes understanding of women's roles in American history and society through books, videos, newsletters, posters and teaching materials.

*New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams* (P.O. Box 3620, Duluth, MN 55803; 218-728-5507) is a bi-monthly magazine created and edited by young women ages 8-14, with news, commentary, health information, activities and good ideas. This same group with their parents publishes bi-monthly *New Moon Parenting*. New Moon has a Website: <http://www.newmoon.org>.

*Resource Book for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults in the Episcopal Church*, published by the Episcopal Church Children's Ministry Cluster (212-922-5212) provides a collection of articles on gender, racism, white privilege, environmental stewardship and more.

*The Girl Who Loved Caterpillars*, The Putnam and Grosset Group, retells a 12th century Japanese story of a free-spirited girl who is resolute in her own identity and will not cave in to society's strict ideas of the roles of women.

*The Wonder of Boys* by Michael Gurian. A practical book that teaches what boys need to grow into strong, responsible, and sensitive men. Available through Courage to Change (800-440-4003).

### **Economic justice**

*Seeds of Simplicity*, a national nonprofit group specializing in the development and distribution of simplicity-themed learning materials for children and their families, is a program of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy at Cornell University. Curriculum packets and other resources help foster consumer will-power in children and adults.

*Fresh Produce* is a quarterly two-page newsletter published by Franklin Research and Development for kids on money, the economy and socially responsible investing. Available from Franklin Insight (711 Atlantic Ave., Boston, MA 02111).

*Kids, Money & Values: Creative Ways to Teach Your Kids about Money* by Patricia Schiff Estess and Irving Barocas, Betterway Books, teaches good habits, attitudes and skills regarding money. The book includes activities, tips, role-playing games and projects, and is coded for ages preschool

through pre-teen.

The children's book *The Table Where Rich People Sit* by Byrd Baylor, illustrated by Peter Parnall, Scribner, teaches the message of stewardship and what it means to be rich.

*United For a Fair Economy* is a national organization that draws attention to the growth of income and wealth inequality in the U.S. and to implications of this inequality for America's democracy, economy and society. The organization offers workshops, trainer training, and a variety of presentations focusing on the particular issues of a group. Visit their Website: <http://www.stw.org>. E-mail: STW@stw.org.

*100 Things to Do for the Earth and We Can Do That: Hunger Awareness Activities That Work* are available from the Office of Global Mission of the Methodist Church (410-727-6106).

### **Eco-justice**

*Beyond Leaf-Raking: Learning to Serve/Serving to Learn* by Peter L. Benson, Abingdon Press, includes 135 project ideas related to the environment (800-251-3320).

*Faith-Based Environmental Justice Resources for Youth & Children*, a comprehensive listing of education resources, has been compiled by the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Resources listed are produced or recommended by denominational offices and other partner religious organizations. To order, call 800-762-0965.

*Families Caring at Home, In the Community, For the Earth* by James McGinnis, Mary Joan and Jerry Park, Institute for Peace and Justice, offers a wide range of family activities and program ideas for helping families to be more compassionate and caring towards one another and towards their community and the world (314-533-4445).

*Just Family Nights: 60 Activities to Keep Your Family Together in a World Falling Apart*, edited by Susan Vogt, Brethren Press. This inter-generational resource offers fun and educational activities to promote family unity and foster healthy values. Environmental stewardship, justice and social action are among the issues addressed (800-441-3712).

*Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood, illustrated by Cheng-Khee Chee, Pfeiffer-Hamilton Publishers, tells a charming fable that promotes an understanding of the earth and our relationship to all beings that inhabit it.

### **Gay and lesbian issues**

*Are You Still My Mother?* by Gloria Guss Back, Warner Books, addresses the emotional needs of parents with gay children, including a discussion of phases they are apt to go through (shock, anger, guilt and self-depreciation), and gives some advice on handling difficult situations.

In *Beyond Acceptance: Parents of Lesbians and Gays Talk about Their Experiences* by C. Wirth Griffin, Prentice-Hall, parents tell how they came to deal with the fact that they had lesbian or gay children.

*Fund for Human Dignity/National Gay and Lesbian Task Force* (666 Broadway, Room 410, New York, NY 10012; 212-529-1600) provides informational pamphlets including *Questions About Homosexuality, Answers to a Parent's Questions About Homosexuality, and Combating Homophobia*.

*Growing Up Gay*. A 55-minute video by TBR Productions (P.O. Box 2362, Boston, MA 02107) that presents what it is like to grow up gay in a heterosexist society.

*Positive Image*. Parents of lesbians and gays speak out in this 30-minute video by the Federation of Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P.O. Box 4087, Hollywood, CA 91617; 800-4-FAMILY).

*Now That You Know: What Every Parent Should Know About Homosexuality* by Betty Fairchild and Nancy Howard, HBJ, is a recommended book for parents.

*Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc.* (P.O. Box 24565, Los Angeles, CA 90024, 213-472-8952) provides gay and lesbian support pamphlets: *About Our Children* (facts), *Can We Understand?* (a guide for parents), *Coming Out to Your Parents* (for young adults and parents) *Why is My Child Gay?* (11 scientists respond). 

## Report from Baghdad

[The following account was written by Brad Simpson, a graduate student at Northwestern University.]

I traveled to Iraq in December with the fourth delegation of Voices In the Wilderness, a campaign to end the economic sanctions against the people of Iraq. Nothing could have prepared me for the overwhelming suffering I witnessed. Malnutrition is epidemic throughout the country, reaching 50 to 60 percent of the population in areas outside Baghdad. Hospitals have set up malnutrition wards to handle the flood of victims, but lack the medicines and supplies to treat patients. In Iraq's leading children's hospital, doctors reported having only 10 percent of the chemotherapy drugs needed to treat childhood cancer victims, whose numbers have increased five-fold since 1991. [Doctors classify the rise in childhood leukemia as an epidemic and blame it on tons of radioactive debris left by the nearly one million depleted uranium-tipped shells fired by the U.S. during the war.]

Surgeons with whom we spoke bemoaned the impact of the embargo on intellectual and scientific life in Iraq. Many had not seen a medical journal or textbook in five years. Nearly every professional in Iraq can relate similar stories. The work of Iraqi poets and artists these days reflects the deep bitterness and desperation engendered by the embargo.

The entire country lacks spare parts for machines of every description; at al Qadissiysa Children's Hospital in Saddam City — Baghdad, 75 percent of the infant incubators lie useless for want of parts. More than half the country lacks potable water, and much of what the poor routinely drink is infected with Cholera, Typhoid

and E. Coli bacteria, leaving malnourished children especially vulnerable to disease. According to the United Nations' own statistics, nearly 600,000 children have died from starvation and disease as a result of economic sanctions.

The psychological toll of the sanctions is more difficult to measure, but extends beyond the increases in crime and divorce. Our government-appointed guide explained that he had not visited his brother in six months, though he lives just down the street. He feared humiliating his brother, who was too poor to offer the obligatory tea that is a measure of one's hospitality in many Arab countries.

The U.S. media has sought to portray U.N. Resolution 986, the celebrated oil-for-food agreement approved on Dec. 9, as the potential savior of Iraq. Iraqis without exception explain that U.N. 986 will not begin to meet the overwhelming needs of the civilian population, and does nothing to repair the infrastructure of the country or reopen the intellectual and academic lifelines for many professionals.

### 'No food right'

The U.S. objected to the recent World Food Summit declaration affirming food as a human right. A U.S. statement filed at the end of the summit declared that "the United States believes that the attainment of any 'right to adequate food' or 'fundamental right to be free from hunger' is a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively that does not give rise to any international obligations nor diminish the responsibilities of national governments toward their citizens."

— *Z Magazine*, 1/97

### Return the power

"What I learned from almost 30 years of teaching supposedly ignorant and debased ghetto children was that, given a chance and *pushed* to set aside their self-hatred, a very large number of them were capable of powerful and subtle thought. I learned what Chicago teacher Marva

Collins learned: that ghetto kids have an appetite for Plato and Shakespeare undiluted, but no appetite at all for lifeless, scientifically selected reading materials.

"In my opinion, we have to radically decentralize government-corporate schooling, return the power to design and assess programs to the local level, and ensure that every form of training for the young aims at producing independent, self-reliant minds; good characters; and individuals who get fighting mad when called a 'human resource' or told their main function is to be part of the 'workforce.'"

— John Taylor Gatto,  
*The Sun*, 2/97

### Army ads on-line

Channel One, already under fire from national education groups for its commercialized educational programming, has received additional criticism for running a Web site with direct links to an advertising site — the Army's recruitment home page. "Children in fifth and sixth grades are too young to understand the consequences of fighting in wars and shouldn't be exposed to glamorous military recruitment ads," said Harold Jordan, coordinator of the national Youth and Militarism Program of the American Friends Service Committee. A recent review of the Web site by the Center for Media Education concluded that Channel One violates an on-line advertising principle that "content areas for young people should not link directly to advertising sites."

### Methodists challenged on inclusion

A "Statement of Conscience" calling for greater inclusiveness of gay and lesbian persons in the church is being circulated by a group of 15 United Methodist clergy among other clergypersons of their denomination. For more information, write "In All Things Charity," c/o Broadway United Methodist Church, 3344 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60657.

short takes

# Risks and rhythms with city kids

by Butch Naters Gamarra

Raising children with conscience and according to the gospel's values, for me, means putting my family first. People need to peel off the layers of guilt-conditioning that say you are selfish if you take care of yourself and your own. I know from experience how families go down the tubes while one is busy being superpriest. It is so easy to forget that Jesus already saved the world. We forget the meaning of "love your neighbor as yourself."

My wife Jennifer (who is also a priest) and I have made the decision to be intentionally present to our family, especially to our daughters Elizabeth, 16, and Katalina, 3. We go to fewer meetings, give up certain political, diocesan and community involvements that aren't making a difference. We do not need to be political for the sake of being political.

To raise children with conscience one needs to be home. The teaching of gospel values is done by example in words and deeds. For instance, one teaches respect by respecting the child. With Katalina this means spending time in conversation, playing, praying, talking about God and Jesus, reading and telling stories, including Bible stories, going for walks to the video store and then sitting with her to watch Sesame Street and Winnie the Pooh, being there for baths and meals, bedtime and waking.

One has to be there to set these founda-

tions, to set boundaries and to teach discipline. More important, however, is teaching about love and forgiveness and learning to say I am sorry. All of this has to do with the love of Christ. It is a conscious decision to put our child in the hands of God and to trust that.

Like most children, Katalina and Eliza-



Katalina and Elizabeth

beth are great emulators. We try to relate to each other in God-centered ways. We work hard at eliminating double standards. We teach the kids about accountability and responsibility. We are big on respect and good manners. The environment we provide at home is essential. It carries over and withstands the influences of pre-school, high school and beyond. Wherever the Spirit is welcomed and invited, positive and powerful things take place. It does not mean that all is rosy and problem-free, but we learn to deal with difficult situations with the power of God's Spirit.

Both our daughters spend time in the churches where we work. In my case, that

means they are in the midst of people from all different backgrounds, cultures and races. They hear different languages. Like the kids in my parish, they are at risk in that when we walk outside, we never know what's going to happen. The risk that we take comes with the exercise of our vocation. It's a risk that everyone who has a vocation to work in the city where there are certain dangers takes. But we trust that they are God's children. We also know that part of God's caring for children is for their parents to be vigilant.

Katalina is a free spirit. She says hello to everybody. She doesn't notice urban decay, but she does sometimes say that trash on the street is "yucky." I wish we could offer her more space. When she visits her grandparents in the suburbs, she rolls in the grass and runs. But we're happy. Katalina walks the streets with us. She talks to cab drivers. She's a city kid.

Elizabeth takes subways now that she is 16. She had to learn to get around; you can't live in the city and be a prisoner. She is a loving, ethical, moral and responsible young woman. She is also a typical teenager; she loves music, goes to dances and hangs out with her friends. She dyes her hair different colors and dresses like her peers. She is a good student and an actress-singer.

We are working at setting a foundation based on the love of God and the values of the gospel. We have seen and experienced the power of God's love and Spirit in our children. We are encouraging them to love and respect, to share and be kind. So far our children have lived according to that expectation. We have also taught them that God is with us always. We trust that. And, therefore, our life together is joyous.

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**Butch Naters Gamarra** is a *Witness* contributing editor and Episcopal priest at St. Stephens, Boston, Mass.

# Shaping our future

by Elizabeth Kaeton

**M**y maternal grandmother had 20 pregnancies and 22 children. Only 15 lived to be adults. I asked her once why she had so many children. She said, “Children are a dream of the future that we live today.”

Make no mistake: This was not the romanticism of a woman wistfully living her life through her children. Neither was this an expression of saccharin, Hallmark-card sentimentality. For a woman who came to this country at age 13 from the poverty of her war-torn village in Portugal, this was a powerful political statement. Children were her opportunities to create a new community, to give form to possibility, to participate in the vision of peace and justice.

Her name was Maria. I named my third and last-born daughter in her honor. She was, for me, a model of womanhood. She exemplified what it meant to be a mother and to be connected to the future, yes, but even more to shape and mold the future through the present and active formation of the values and behavior of our children. I learned from her that to be a parent was to be a primary architect of society.

If we haven't learned the power of the humble role of parenthood, the family court system knows it well. “In the best interest of the children” is often not about a standard of justice — especially in gay and lesbian families. In 1976, I lost custody of my two children in what was described as the first open lesbian cus-

tody case to be heard in that county court. It took five years, countless educational sessions with the family court system, and thousands of dollars in lawyers' fees to convince “the powers that be” that their standard needed expansion in scope and definition.

In that time, however, I learned to hear my grandmother's sage aphorism in a deeply personal and yet highly political way. In the midst of the deep pain and anguish we felt, being separated from our kids for no other reason than the fact that we were two women who loved each other, we also realized that we had an opportunity to make the future different for ourselves, our children and our community. We realized that this is the way women have been architects of our culture and society for generations.

Beyond our personal yearnings and needs, if we, as lesbian women, were going to have any influence in creating a new community, if we were going to give form to the possibility of new constellations of family, if we were going to participate in the vision of peace and justice for our culture and society, children must be an integral part of our lives.

In the fourth year of our custody battle, we decided to explore all of our options while continuing to pursue custody of our children. We researched foster care, adoption and insemination. We made phone calls, visited adoption agencies and women's clinics, and talked to legal experts. And we prayed. Without ceasing.

By the end of that year, we found our

11-room home filled with children. My daughters came to stay for the summer and announced they were not going back to their father; by the end of August, the court system agreed. We were approved as adoptive parents of a profoundly retarded Downs Syndrome child. We became foster parents of an 18-month-old boy and two sisters who had been physically and sexually abused by their mother's boyfriend, as well as two brothers whose mother had an emotional breakdown. At once, our life was wonderfully chaotic and deeply fulfilling. Providing love, nurture and stability for our children was probably the most radical, revolutionary act we could have performed.

Our biological and adoptive children are remarkable young men and women. Our eldest daughter is married to a wonderful man and they are working on making us grandmothers. One of our middle children is a card-carrying Republican.

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*Children are an opportunity to create a new community, to give form to possibility.*

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All of our children are fiercely committed to the concept of family, but their understanding of that notion is different than

many of their contemporaries. The values and beliefs they learned at home are now the vehicle of increased tolerance of diversity, if not change and transformation.

“Children are the dream of the future that we live today.” As my grandmother experienced, not all of our dreams live to see fruition. I'd like to think that our daughter, Maria, is more than the dream her great-grandmother had when she came to this country at just about the same age as my daughter is now. I'd like to think that Maria's children will be able to dream a future beyond anything she could ask for or imagine. For such, I believe, is part of the peace and justice of God. **LW**

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**Elizabeth Kaeton** is canon missionary to The Oasis, a ministry with and to gay men and lesbians sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Newark.

# We are family

I remember years ago as a child watching my family react when Uncle Jimmy came into a room. He was a wonderfully flamboyant gay man — from every angle. Little whispers would go around the room about his clothing, where he went on vacation, what his partner did for a living. They were not unusual topics, but the tone made all the difference. It was that little snicker, that sly look passed from nephew to niece to uncle to aunt that taught me more about homophobia than I ever want to remem-

ber — Uncle Jimmy's life was the subject of humor and even disdain. I did not want that to happen to me. Ever. My parents did not take part in the subtle gay-bashing, but neither did they oppose it.

Their motto, "Live and let live," was not enough for me as a child, and it is not going to make it today. I learned that it must be okay to make fun of gays and lesbians. I also learned over the years that silence is a great enforcer. If nothing else, it tells me that you don't care. It may also tell me the issue is so terrible that polite people do not speak of it to their children.

If I had been reared in a perfect world, my parents would have embraced Uncle

Jimmy with as much love and acceptance publicly as I suspect they did privately. And age-appropriate answers might have been given to a child wondering where the mommy was in that family — and how come they didn't have children?

There were so many aspects of life that I was encouraged to appreciate — books, music, food, the outdoors, even interests my parents and siblings did not share. There were moments in which my family was pro-active in their concern. Why do we stop short at people who seem different? How do we teach tolerance, the first step — and love, the second?

Tolerance can only be a first step. I tolerate what I cannot change. I am letting some element of life co-exist with me because I have no choice, e.g. pain, frustration, sickness, even death. But what about people? Is it enough to co-exist, to "live and let live," to put up with someone? It is fear and the unknown that hold us back. I cannot simply pick up a book about people to learn more about them — I must live with them, sharing their hopes and dreams, triumphs and failures. That's step two; that is when fear is put aside and understanding replaces tolerance.

This is what we are about at **We Are Family**, trying to make the world a safer, more accepting place of gay and lesbian people. Sometimes our success begins in small ways. A year ago, a comfortable, politically conservative businessman and public servant from a small town in South Carolina received a copy of the first issue of *Plain Talk*, our periodic journal directed towards people who deal with youth. His response was to pick up the phone to say, "Thank you! This is what I want my children to see so that they will have a chance to understand." His children are being given a far different message from the one I received 30 years ago.

— Warren Gress is program director of *We Are Family*, a non-profit organization in Charleston, S.C. (803-937-0000).

## 'Mia has two moms'

I have two parents of the same gender who love each other (and me!). I consider my situation normal, but I have felt the effects of other people's ignorance and prejudice. It is hard for me to believe that there are people who consider the fact that I have two mothers "abnormal."



Maria Conroy Kaeton

In the eighth grade, there was a student who decided to make an issue out of my home situation. She decided I was a "freak," and that all freaks should be ignored. She was even able to convince some of the other kids in my class to do the same. It really bothered me when other students in the class would not talk to me.

However, when they realized that knowing this fact did not change who I was and that it is not the gender of the parents that matters but rather the love and stability at home, everything went

back to normal. It also helped when people realized that she was going through her own family crisis at the time. I guess, in part, she was experiencing a lot of hurt and anger, a lot of frustration and fear, and she took it out on me. I guess that's how prejudice works sometimes.

I don't know if growing up with two mothers has made me more aware of prejudice or not. I have some great friends with parents of different genders who are very aware, very sensitive. Come to think of it, though, most of my friends are from "different" families: African-American, Philippine, and mixed races. I've always gone to a school which had a lot of diversity and which was either affiliated with a religion or where ethics and justice were taught.

I would not change my situation even if I were given the chance. I love my family very much and I know that they love me. Why would I change that?

— Maria Conroy Kaeton, 15

*But what of the price of peace? I think of the good, decent, peace-loving people I have known by the thousands and I wonder.*

*How many of them are so afflicted with the wasting disease of normalcy that, even as they declare the peace, their hands reach out with an instinctive spasm in the direction of their loved ones, in the direction of their comforts, their home, their security, their income, their future, their plans — that five-year plan of studies, that 10-year plan of professional status, that 20-year plan of family growth and unity, that 50-year plan of decent life and honorable natural demise.*

*“Of course, let us have the peace,” we cry, “but at the same time let us have normalcy, let us lose nothing, let our lives stand intact, let us know neither prison nor ill repute nor disruption of ties.” And because we must encompass this and protect that, and because at all costs — at all costs — our hopes must march on schedule, and because it is unheard of that in the name of peace a sword shall fall, disjoining that fine and cunning web that our lives have woven, because it is unheard of that good men should suffer injustice or families be sundered or good repute be lost — because of this we cry peace and cry peace, and there is no peace. There is no peace because there are no peace-makers. There are no makers of peace because the making of peace is at least as costly as the making of war — at least as exigent, at least as disruptive, at least as liable to bring disgrace and prison and death in its wake.*

—Daniel Berrigan,  
No Bars to Manhood, 1970

# The price of peace

by Jeanne Heyer

When I was young in the peace movement, I knew what needed to be done. I and some of my fellow peacemakers were possessed by a vision of social justice remarkable in both its clarity and its arrogance. I believed in myself as one of the prophets, one of the movers and shakers who would tumble the bestial social order with the force of our moral purity. My friends and I were somehow more “real” than the rest of our brothers and sisters; more lit with passion and surety and risk; we were the sacrificial lambs whose lives would be spent so that others might live. We held the fate of the earth and our collective souls in our hands. We were the redeemers. And we were sure.

Now I am not so sure. Now that I am a parent I weigh things differently. I continue to believe that our redemption is joined irrevocably to each other, and will not be purchased without cost or risk or blood. Each of us has a responsibility to bear some of that cost, to play our part in the risk of redemption. Though I cleave to my belief in the necessity of moral purification and meaningful self-sacrifice, I am distrustful of what I have come to perceive as movement grandiosity. I recently rediscovered a famous passage written by Daniel Berrigan during the Vietnam war. While I wonder if he would see things differently almost 30 years later, it remains a piece that moves me profoundly. Its power and my great re-

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**Jeanne Heyer** is a nurse working in Milwaukee, Wis. She lived near the Catholic Worker in the inner city for 10 years, before building a home in the country with her husband which they both support through part-time work and frugal living.

spect for the author remain undiminished. His passage is only one manifestation of a “culture of heroics” that thrives within the peace movement; there are many more contemporary examples. Berrigan’s call for personal sacrifice, his challenge to peacemakers to “up the ante,” cannot be easily silenced or denied. Much of his exhortation resonates loudly in my own heart.

And yet, there is something that jars; a righteousness that allows the peacemaker to sacrifice family in the name of a large vision. It seems to me that a crucial distinction must be made between self-sacrifice and “other-sacrifice,” and that this is a distinction often overlooked by many in social justice movements.

If the cost of a decision is borne by you, if the “blood” that you shed is your own, this is self-sacrifice. “Other-sacrifice” occurs when the cost of your choice is borne by another. Berrigan alludes to this kind of sacrifice when he mentions the “peace-loving people who cry out for peace. . . but whose hands reach out with an instinctive spasming in the direction of their loved ones.” If these “loved ones” include dependent children, I suggest that Berrigan’s challenge (and others of its nature) have crossed the line from self-sacrifice to promoting “other-sacrifice.” When we allow another individual (or group) to bear the cost of our vision we enter ground that is fraught with peril. With each choice to sacrifice another, the possibility of social justice is diminished.

Perhaps there is a certain faithfulness in Berrigan’s “peace-loving people” who reach for their loved ones. What if this desire to protect and nurture, this “instinctive-spasming” is exactly that — a God-given reflex that serves to protect

something precious. Is it not part of the evil of war, the parting of parent and child, this whole-hearted consent that even our most precious bone and blood may be sacrificed to the god of war and global supremacy? Why have we as a nation agreed to pay this price, to accept this “collateral damage”? Should we not be building a different way — one that honors the deepest instincts of our hearts? What if more soldiers said “no” to war because they had small children, or a partner pregnant with new life? What if more soldiers said that war is not worth sundering any family; not ours here or theirs on distant shores? Perhaps there are times when reaching toward hearth and home, invoking protected space, is a courageous and faith-filled act.

But how do I know what (and when) to protect, and what to risk? What are the needs of my daughters and how do they “stack up” against the resounding need of the larger human family? I have too few answers.

I know what I want for my children, however. I want them to love this earth they’ve found themselves on, to know God in the warmth of spring rain and the tartness of wild grapes. I want them to have this time of innocence, to walk without fear, to learn this love. This is an easy lesson in the sacred circle of prairie and fir and wild orchard that surrounds our home.

But there is another lesson to be taught, of balance and responsibility, of faith that speaks in the dark. Of justice that draws itself up, hand over hand, like water from a well. This lesson I feel ill-equipped to teach. Outside my window sunset washes newly fallen snow with apricot and lavender, and the moon rises silver and lovely. There is beauty here to make the heart ache. Here it would be easy to relegate to our peripheral vision those who live daily with fear and gunfire, and without food. Their voices haunt me, waft on summer

breezes between the chase-and-tickle laughter of my daughters, keen in the trees on cold winter nights, plead for bread when I scrape leftovers into the compost pile. My children must learn to hear their voices. I dread this lesson though, I do not want to teach it. Early last summer we handed out leaflets urging the lifting of economic sanctions against Iraq. My five-year-old asked to be included because she was worried that the Iraqi children wouldn’t have enough to eat. We had been leafletting for perhaps 10 minutes when she offered a leaflet to



Linnea

a man who snatched it from her, muttered “filthy pigs” and threw it on the ground. She came to me with hurt and confusion in her eyes, wondering why he had called her a “filthy pig” and why he didn’t care that the children didn’t have enough to eat. I don’t remember what I said — only the ache I felt as I saw some of her innocence leave her, a loss I am not yet done grieving.

And there are other voices inside me, too; older, quieter voices. What of innocence? they whisper — this too is necessity, this wide-eyed delight in being. This

is the bedrock on which my children will dance and love and fight. Dance gracefully, love and fight fiercely and tenderly.

I do not mean to imply that sacrifice is not required, just that we make sure we sacrifice only what is ours to give. The God I know is not the God of Abraham sacrificing Isaac. I am wary of any movement that rewards this sort of “other-sacrifice.” When I can imagine that my path and God’s are one and the same — I may risk injuring someone who did not choose to be “sacrificed.” As Sam Keen writes in *Hymn to An Unknown God*,



Rachel

“there is a high degree of correlation between true believers, known gods, and high body counts.” Too often people committed to a cause provide powerful reinforcement to one another that we are indeed righteous and we don’t have time to occupy ourselves with such trivial matters as whose turn it is to put the kids to bed or who does the diapers. We can be expensive people to live with.

When we align our eyesight with God’s, when we protect large causes by sacrificing small people, we stand in danger of perverting our rightful relationship

with God. When we see ourselves as the prophets who will singlehandedly bring the kingdom into being, we commit the sin of pride. We lose humility. We forget that the ground we stand on now has been purchased by our forebears, that we in our turn will do good or ill, but this ground will outlast us. The salmon will spawn; the bear, the wolf and the lynx will lick and smell and mate yet again, the new moon will rise and the dogtooth violet sprout in the springtime loam long after we as individuals and perhaps even as a species have lived out all our lives.

Even if we destroy all these precious creations and they too disappear, I have to believe that the force which first pulled life out of the primeval ooze will endure and recreate a new (and perhaps wiser) life yet again.

All of our buildings and bridges, our demonstrations and discussions, our freedom rides and families are but articulations of God's lasting urge to create, articulations that are sometimes graceful, sometimes clumsy, but always fleeting. Everything we presume to know and everything we separate ourselves from is part of this force, and will return to it. We too are creations, charged not with formulating the final outcomes, but with serving in some small way the power of love and faith on this earth. This is our rightful place, a returning to humus, to ground.

A community rooted in humility considers very carefully the question of who pays the cost of sacrifice. Such a community reminds its members that this question is at the heart of right relationship with God, the earth, and each other. I pray that these gaps in my certainty will be fertile ground in which my daughters can live and grow justly, humbly and joyously. I pray that this will be bedrock for later, when their eyes open to hate and ignorance (as they must); when faith and love and sight are not so easy.

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## Overabundant love

by Jerry Berrigan

I am young and childless. But I do know, from the receiving end, a tad about conscientious child-rearing. I and two fine sisters, Frida and Katy, were raised in the context of a biblical community dedicated to resistance to the arms race by means of direct action. Since their wedding in 1973 our folks have collectively spent about six years separated from each other and from us three, all for saying, in the strongest possible nonviolent language, No! to omnicide and YES! to life.

Our family has anguished. There is a 1984 photo of my mother with Katy on her shoulders (not yet 2) and Frida in front of her. Frida is wearing sunglasses to hide her tears. We all wept then, and again and again subsequently. That day Momma was sentenced to three years for a Plowshares action.

The second Beatitude blesses those who mourn, and promises their comfort in justice. Our mother served 26 months, during which time Frida and I entered adolescence and Katy her formative years. A difficult time for us all, yet we emerged. If not unscathed, perhaps strengthened.

Jeanne Heyer's argument, as I read it, boils down to this: In the name of no higher good does one have the right to sacrifice others, especially children. The means are the ends; doing violence to children in the name of nonviolence is both ludicrous and reprehensible.

This is very true. The question is, however: Does sacrifice necessarily do

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violence to one's family?

Two considerations first. Popular understanding of family is false, antibiblical. The Lord's Prayer begins *Our Parent*; it follows that we are all brothers and sisters of one another. If this is real, we must live accordingly, in a common distribution, in defense of our defenseless sisters and brothers the world over.

Another issue: The question of whether and to what extent to deprive children of material goods or of more fundamental needs is entirely a first-world problem. Parents in the third world and in war zones have no choice, and our comfort, our false security, is built upon their grief. Nonviolence is rejection of the weapon of privilege. In living and raising our progeny honestly and nonviolently, we must not only affirm the good in life, but denounce the evil, and confront it. Not to do so is to ignore it, and live in delusion.

Again, therefore: Is the cross an act of violence on loved ones? No, indeed, if carried out in a spirit of love. To the contrary, not to accept the cross is to live a lie (essentially, that our lives are more valuable than others') and convey it to the next generation. A great disservice, one with far-reaching, pathological ramifications.

Our parents shared with us their best approximation of truth, which found its most necessary and radical exercise in *agape*. We three recognized the need for people to stand against nuclearism, thus leading a life of integrity in a culture of insanity.

We made out Okay! At all times we enjoyed an overabundance of love, and all of our needs (to be distinguished from wants) were always met. What more could a parent hope to give a child?

# The justice 'summit': Just *who* is resisting change?

by Julie A. Wortman

Some 550 Episcopalians who work on peace, economic justice and environmental issues gathered in Cincinnati this February for what national church organizers had billed as a "justice summit" — an important opportunity, as one promotional mailing explained, "to shape the peace and justice agenda for the Episcopal Church for the next triennium and beyond by developing specific strategies for action by the upcoming General Convention."

It proved to be an opportunity that was largely missed.

The summit's sponsor was a committee created by the church's national executive council to address the sprawling array of justice concerns that continue to vie for national church attention despite relentless programmatic consolidations and belt-tightening. The committee has adopted the World Council of Churches' handy theme of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (or JPIC, pronounced "J-PIC") as its own in an effort to get church justice groups to work together — largely through regional JPIC committees, but also through national gatherings like the Cincinnati summit.

National church money may be tight for events like this, but the JPIC committee and its staff managed a rich program. Summit workshops addressed a range of timely topics — racism and AIDS, living wage campaigns, how to organize faith-based credit unions, farmworker justice, women and poverty, environmental stewardship, the voluntary simplicity movement — to which the keynote address by Chile's ambassador, H.E. Juan Somavia, applied a global lens. Steve Charleston, former Bishop of Alaska, and theologian Verna Dozier revived flagging

front-line spirits with blood-and-guts visions of Gospel commitment, while Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning and House of Deputies President Pamela Chinnis assured participants that the church desperately needs their witness.

A commemorative video of Browning's own "public witness" during his tenure as presiding bishop — from his "there shall be no outcasts" proclamation on behalf of gay and lesbian church members to his opposition to the Gulf War and examples of solidarity work in El Salvador, Cuba, Japan and Palestine — brought glad tears to many eyes tired of reading about reactionary bishops and misbehaving clergy and treasurers.

But the real substance of the gathering was in the summit's assemblies, to which participants were randomly assigned. The design was for assembly members to bring their justice concerns to the table and then to find interlocking strategies that would hold up the JPIC commitment to building coalitions.

Summit participants bent to their work with gusto. "My issue is inclusion," stated Aura Almanzar, one of a delegation of 20 Hispanic activists who had travelled to Cincinnati from New York City hoping for a strong voice in the proceedings. "I find that Hispanics in the church are ignored — and the church ignores the issues that affect us, such as immigrant rights and the need for people to be paid a living wage for their work."

In the same subgroup MacDonald Jean of Haiti, an Episcopal priest who serves in Haiti's senate, stressed that "the victims of the *coup d'état* have not yet found justice" and that the church should respect Creole as "a language of the people."

In quick succession others spoke to other needs — for serious conversation about racism and AIDS, for better ways to prevent violence against women, for expanded public policy advocacy, for more

attention to welfare reform, for stronger commitment to environmental issues.

Then came the strategies for church-based response. By this time, peoples' creative juices were flowing: If the church wants to be more intentional about environmental concerns, maybe it should reorganize its provincial structure according to bioregions; if the church's Euro-centric, straight, economically privileged, male-dominated congregations want to avoid recognizing their biases against people of color, women, gay men and lesbians, immigrants, and the economically disadvantaged, maybe it is time to challenge those biases in a way that can't be ignored — through revising the *Book of Common Prayer* to make it more welcoming to these people; if corporations are responsible for so many injustices, why not ask the trustees of church investments to be more intentional about investing the portfolios in their care in a more socially responsible way?

Participants reached the end of their deliberations tired, but enthusiastic. "The whole church should be having these kinds of conversations," said Anita Collins, a parish educator from Akron, Ohio.

A team of facilitators then bundled up all the newsprint and trooped off to compile reports that would form the basis of each assembly's input into the summit's final "town meeting."

The next morning, when assembly participants saw the results of the facilitators' efforts to "boil down" their proposals, things rapidly began to fall apart. Advocacy for prayerbook revision had become support for inclusive language liturgies; socially responsible investing got buried and bio-regions were never mentioned.

"What you've given us generally reflects what we talked about yesterday,"



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Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

a priest from Long Island pointed out in Assembly #2, “but minus the passion and the details.” Heads nodded vigorous agreement.

A member of the JPIC committee in the room explained that the committee’s General Convention resolutions had already been filed. At this point, he said, the only way the committee could bring the concerns of the summit to the deputies and bishops meeting in Philadelphia this summer was in the form of a greatly condensed summary of the summit’s proceedings that would be part of the executive council’s traditional state-of-the-church “report” to the convention. He added that time limitations required that the town meeting scheduled for later that morning be confined to a brief report-back from each assembly’s facilitators.

So much for shaping the church’s peace and justice agenda by getting General Convention to consider concrete strategies for church-based action.

“But we want the church to *do* something, to *move*,” another frustrated participant responded. “Why is it so hard to get these ideas before the church?”

A little imagination and a lot less investment in institutional protocol would have allowed the summit’s JPIC organizers — mostly longtime peace and justice activists themselves — to see that it didn’t have to be as they seemed to think.

It still wasn’t too late for the organizers to get out of the way and allow the creative coalition-making they had helped unleash come to full term — in a real town meeting. The General Convention deputies attending the summit (proudly introduced by the organizers at the beginning of the event) could have been brought forward and anointed bearers of the group’s resolutions — there was still time for that.

Instead, our organizers fell into the trap institutional leaders so often do when “followers” actually think for themselves: They began blaming the people they were trying to lead — or is it manage?

The facilitator for Assembly #2, Kwasi Thornell, typified this phenomenon when, during his town meeting “report-back,” he

defined his group’s resistance to the abbreviated reports as indicative of people’s unwillingness to surrender their own particular special interests. “We went back into our group this morning and went back to business as usual,” he said.

Participants in that assembly looked at each other in disbelief. Yes, they had complained because most of their proposed strategies had never made it into the report. Yes, they had asked that those details not be lost. And, yes, they had expressed frustration with a process that seemed hell-bent on putting a lid on their input.

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*The summit’s organizers fell into the trap institutional leaders so often do when “followers” actually think for themselves: They began blaming the people they were trying to lead — or is it manage?*

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Assembly #2 was not the only one in which, as another unhappy facilitator characterized it, “blood was spilled.” From the report-backs it emerged that participants in every one of the five assemblies had responded with similar frustration and confusion to the mechanistic “synthesizing” work of the facilitators. This should have been a clue that the “business-as-usual” charge should more properly have been directed at the summit’s organizers.

Sure, people had their own concerns and hadn’t abandoned them in the process of looking for JPIC-inspired connections. And, as one disgruntled black facilitator chided, it was absolutely true that the white folks in the room were getting a taste of institutional manipulation that people of color have routinely run up against. But if he and the others on the summit design team had been listening during these three days, they would have

been keenly aware that the assembly participants were more than willing to expand their thinking. As one man said at the end, “I’ve been converted to welfare reform as an issue I need to take up and make my own. I invite you to take AIDS, my issue, and make it yours.”

Perhaps the institutional leadership at this summit understood that the proposals coming from the Hispanic contingent for a beefed-up national Hispanic office didn’t have a ghost of a chance of being accepted, given the climate of organizational downsizing and streamlining currently gaining momentum in the church. Perhaps they knew that “prayer book revision” had been officially determined “untimely” by the current chair of the church’s Standing Liturgical Commission. Perhaps pushing for more, not fewer, resources for supporting the Jubilee program seemed to them unrealistic, given the state of the national church budget.

But the fact was that the summit’s organizers had hyped this event for months as a chance to help the church respond more effectively to social, economic and environmental ills — and more than 500 people who care passionately about these issues had responded to the call. Assuming that the JPIC committee was really committed to enabling “the people in the trenches to shape the peace and justice ministries of the Episcopal Church,” as JPIC committee chair Arthur Williams claimed, it owed participants a chance to debate and prioritize together a final set of recommendations. That, after all, is what most people think a “town meeting” is for.

“One of the great battlefields of this church is the battlefield of the law, of the tradition,” Steve Charleston stressed during a morning reflection on Matthew’s gospel. “If we are exclusive,” he said, “tradition is not law but tyranny. If we are inclusive, tradition is justice.” Who imagined at the time that he wasn’t only referring to church battles between progressives and conservatives, but to the foibles of institutional progressives themselves?

# Jubilee in a light bulb

by Amory B. Lovins

When the earth was without form and void, and darkness moved upon the face of the waters," the first creative act was: "Let there be light!" Artificial light has uplifted people by letting them read and write after dusk, spreading the fruits of written culture from scholars to everybody. Light illuminates in more ways than meet the eye. But most lamps are still incandescent — and waste 95 percent of the electricity they use.

Now we can see to it that "the light is good" by substituting compact-fluorescent lamps, which use only one-quarter as much electricity to produce the same amount of light for at least 13 times as long. The new lamps' extra cost is usually more than repaid by avoiding a dozen replacement lamps and trips up a ladder to install them, so the electrical savings are better than free.

In the U.S., such a lamp costs \$7-\$11 wholesale, much less to make. Over its life, it saves about \$40-\$60 worth of utility fuel, lamps and labor. Thus it creates many tens of dollars' net wealth — and it frees up for more productive uses hundreds of dollars' investment in electric supply. But the lamp can do much, much more.

If the saved electricity comes from a coal-fired power station, this one lamp over its life will prevent the emission of a metric ton of carbon dioxide, which threatens to change the earth's climate; at least eight kilograms of sulphur oxides, contributing to acid rain that kills fish and

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**Amory B. Lovins** is research director of the Rocky Mountain Institute, an organization which addresses itself to the global environmental crisis through promoting decreases in energy use. He is author of *Soft Energy Paths* (1977), a seminal work whose political impact experts say was comparable to that of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Contact the Institute at 1739 Snowmass Creek Road, Snowmass, CO 81654-9199; 970-927-3851.

trees and to air pollution that harms people and buildings; and also nitrogen oxides, heavy metals and other pollutants.

If the saved electricity comes instead from a nuclear power station, this one lamp over its life will avoid creating half a curie of strontium-90 and caesium-137, and other long-lived radioactive wastes, plus about 25 milligrams of plutonium — equivalent in explosive power to 385 kilograms of TNT, and also radiotoxic enough, if evenly distributed into human lungs, to cause at least 2,000 cancers.

If the saved electricity is made from oil, one such lamp can save some 200 liters: enough to propel a superefficient car for nearly 11,000 kilometers — five times from Athens to London — or to carry a person from Athens to Stockholm in an efficient jet.

Giving away such lamps in a poor country like Haiti could increase the disposable income of an average household by perhaps as much as one-fifth. The reduced electrical demand could cut India's peak load by more than one-fourth, make electric service far more reliable, and boost national development. In fact, since one-fourth of global development capital goes to electrification, and most Third World debt is energy-related, energy efficiency is a prerequisite to sustainable development — in all countries, rich and poor.

By displacing costly new hydroelectric dams, efficient lamps can prevent the flooding of Brazilian rainforests, Chinese farmlands, and Native Canadians' hunting-grounds. Such lamps, plus similar electrical savings in other uses, can also bring solar electricity within economically feasible reach for more than one milliard (a thousand millions) people in remote villages.

In effect, we are *paid* tens of dollars per lamp to accept these benefits. That saved money can enrich electric utilities as well as customers. Southern California

Edison Company, for example, has *given away* half-a-million such lamps to its customers, because that's cheaper than *operating* its power plants. The utility's revenues fell, but its costs fell even more.

Energy efficiency saves tax-free money that largely recirculates in the local economy, supporting local jobs and multipliers. That's among the most powerful known engines of economic development. Simple household energy savings encouraged by the Osage (Iowa) Municipal Utilities (population 4,000), for example, saved so much money that the utility prepaid all its debt, built up a big surplus, cut its tariff by one-third, thereby attracted two factories to town, and kept in town more than \$1,000 per household per year — money that had previously left the rural area to buy utility inputs — thus creating an island of relative prosperity.

In the U.S., efficient new lighting equipment, fully used in existing buildings, can save at least one-fifth of all electricity used nationwide, cut short-term net costs by \$30 milliard per year, and displace 120 huge power stations costing \$200-plus milliard.

Adding the most efficient motors, appliances, windows, etc., now on the market brings the total potential savings to *three-fourths* of all U.S. electricity now used — at a cost far below that of just *operating* an existing coal or nuclear power plant, even if building it cost nothing. Similarly, saving three-fourths of today's oil costs less than finding new domestic oil or importing oil. And proven ways are available to finance and deliver these new technologies quickly and reliably to those who need them.

The energy efficiency revolution, finally, is key to making the coming solar age practical and affordable. Rediscovering our solar heritage — Socrates' advice to make our homes warm and sunny in winter but cool and shaded in summer was brought to a high art in such sophisticated passive-solar cities as Olynthus, Priene, and Delos — and grafting modern efficiency technologies onto it offers good news, indeed, for all people and for the earth. **TW**

# Proposed amendment to Title IV draws criticism

by Karen D. Bota

An innocent-seeming executive council proposal to amend the Episcopal Church's Title IV disciplinary canons to specify mediation as an alternative to litigation in church disputes has been widely challenged by critics who say the resolution is short-sighted and that the council's action amounts to an "end run" around established committees and commissions.

The resolution in question proposes that parties involved in a Title IV dispute (except one related to an imposed sentence) may agree to mediation at any time during proceedings. John McCann of Lexington developed the resolution in response to council's anxiety that passage of two resolutions at the church's triennial General Convention this summer which would compel all dioceses to ordain women and license them to serve could lead to attempts at enforcement through presentments and ecclesiastical court trials.

"The executive council is interested in assuring the church of the existence of an alternative to the ecclesiastical court approach to resolving our disputes," McCann explained in an on-line discussion of the issue via Ecunet. "Successful mediation is less expensive than a trial, measured both in dollars and in pain."

Mediation, however, may not be the answer in all Title IV disputes, critics of the executive council action were quick to point out. "Mediation only works if the two parties are on an even playing field," Nancy Hopkins, a church consultant on sexual misconduct, wrote in an Ecunet posting.

"Since sexual misconduct is essentially an abuse of power, I believe strongly that attempting to deal with it in mediation is

entirely inappropriate," Hopkins said.

The pressure on the victim to cooperate with mediation because of the disparity in power is likely to be overwhelming, agreed Anne Clarke Brown of Plymouth, Vt. "No matter how well intentioned, [mediation] could work more often to the advantage of the party with most power in the system — particularly in cases of sexual misconduct," Brown wrote. "I also fear it could be a way of moving such cases back behind closed doors."

Another problem with the resolution, some critics say, is that it bypasses the committees and commissions that since the last General Convention have been meeting to study issues and bring forth recommendations.

"Individual members of executive council certainly have the right to put forward resolutions to convention, but I do object to executive council as a whole ignoring committees and commissions and backing these individual projects," noted Jane Garrett, co-chair of the sexuality dialogue committee, during the Ecunet debate.

Finally, some questioned the executive council's apparent fear of ecclesiastical trials. "There are times when a trial may be the most appropriate course of action although very difficult and painful," pointed out Gay Jennings, co-chair of the General Convention's legislative committee on canons, who noted that the aim of the church's disciplinary proceedings is to seek the truth and to provide justice.

"The purpose of ecclesiastical trials is not to preserve peace, although I'm all for peace," Jennings said. "Peace without justice is no peace at all."

## Porter leaves national staff

In a surprise move, Diane Porter, the Episcopal Church's senior executive for program since 1992, resigned her post effective March 15. She did not indicate specific plans for the future. —ENS

# Families valued

by Connie Bradley

*Families Valued: Parenting and Politics for the Good of All Children*, by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer. Friendship Press, 1996.

This book advertises that "a father explores how the needs of children can change personal and social priorities." Its inspiration stems from the theft of an old, hand-me-down tri-cycle. When 3-year-old Hannah is concerned about leaving her bike outside, her father dismisses the fears, only to have them subsequently realized. Father and daughter were disillusioned. Discovering it later vandalized, little Hannah tearfully wonders aloud, "Why would anybody do this?" Touched by his daughter's loss of innocence, Nelson-Pallmeyer determines to become sensitive to the voices of children.

So far, so good. But *Families Valued* proves a drawn-out collection of father-knows-best dissertations, peppered with anecdotes that give insight into a many-faceted author who has retreated from conventional lifestyle, choosing instead a commune of shared parenting, part-time employment and co-op networking.

Nevertheless, this book is a thorough, articulate work and one to be commended for its endeavor to diagnose America's ills. But to a 63-year-old, black woman like this reviewer, there are few revelations. Is it not common knowledge that society is in crisis, that poverty is bad for children and hampers their education, that parental neglect and instability in the

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Connie Bradley is a wife, mother, grandmother, post office retiree and self-published author who lives in Maywood, Ill.

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Freelance writer **Karen D. Bota** is *The Witness'* promotion consultant.

home have a negative, dysfunctional effect on all classes of children, that welfare is demeaning, that politics are devious, that violence is a belligerent response to a hostile environment, that crime is bred by lack of gainful employment and equal opportunity, and, yes, that for the future of our children, we must become ecology-minded?

These are the everyday dilemmas that plague America and resist being resolved.

It is no surprise that Nelson-Pallmeyer is critical of the Christian Coalition whose elitist members advocate personal responsibility. Yet, he concedes that his concerns about children and morals have something in common with the religious right. Unlike the homophobic, chauvinistic fundamentalists, however, Nelson-Pallmeyer endears himself to the reader with a lack of self-righteousness and an honest assessment of his own prejudices.

## Another viewpoint

*[Joan Elbert, a friend of Connie Bradley, offers a different perspective.]*

I'm considerably older than Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer but grew up with the same small-town, white middle-class mentality. I could have used his insights while trying to raise four white kids in Maywood, Ill., where "white" became the minority. I eventually learned these concepts the hard way from people like Connie Bradley with whom we joined in struggle in the sixties and seventies. Young parents today have no "civil rights" or "anti-war" movement to challenge their mindset. To most people of color there is nothing new raised here, but unfortunately, most white folks in this country need a dose of Nelson-Pallmeyer's analysis.

Nelson-Pallmeyer's style is often

He acknowledges deserving no pat on the back for being relieved to hear that his daughter shuns one of her black classmates not for his color, but because a learning disability makes him a bore.

Though not overtly about race (and quick to point out that welfare and poverty are not the exclusive domain of blacks), a book discussing families values in America cannot avoid race issues. Chapters include "Poverty-bred Prejudices"; "Men and Violence"; "Race, Poverty and Politics"; "Values, Prisons and Policies." Predictable conclusions are drawn as to the harm of ethnic stereotyping or the failure of a prison system that's become a profitable industry rather than a rehabilitating influence.

Nelson-Pallmeyer also explores the debilitating effects of institutional racism. Wrestling with affirmative action, he does not recommend its elimination

anecdotal. This is effective in getting the reader to identify with ordinary situations and understand their more systemic ramifications. His suggested solutions sound simple. That's the beauty of them. People who understand the complex problems of society often feel cynical and helpless. So-called simple solutions (what we buy, how we live) do have an impact, as long as they are seen as part of a quest for institutional as well as personal modification.

I'm convinced that parents need to really listen to their children and pay more attention to their instincts. It may be true that "it takes a village to raise a child," but I believe a child can also raise a village. Think what black youth, particularly Fred Hampton [a Black Panther leader], did for the village of Maywood and beyond.

—Joan Elbert is the staffperson for *Kairos-U.S.A. in Chicago, Ill.*

but commends revision. Quoting such prominent African Americans as Cornel West, William Julius Wilson and Jesse Jackson, Nelson-Pallmeyer names economic stagnancy, corporate irresponsibility, and governmental neglect as the culprits in the struggle of poor people to better provide for their children.

To his credit, Nelson-Pallmeyer does more than just identify what's wrong. He devotes a chapter to proposals that funding be increased for children's programs that work, that support be given children's advocacy, that welfare be replaced with a national family policy, that public TV be funded and advertisers regulated, that income tax be regulated and social security benefits reflect income.

At book's end, I was reminded of the beginning. After his daughter's bike is stolen, Nelson-Pallmeyer laments that this would have never occurred in his boyhood neighborhood. But you can't go home again. Time brings change, and simple solutions for complicated problems are in themselves a trap set by the American state of flux. That was the case, for example, with integration. By the time it became a norm, cynical blacks had decided no longer to submerge their true identities to interact with patronizing whites.

Nevertheless, *Families Valued*, despite repetitiveness, is well-documented and well-meaning. Transcending its pages is the spirit of a caring man. Perhaps the future does lie in the idealism and dedication of people like Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer who, among other things, listen to and value the observations of children. **TV**

review

Why don't young people come to church? Why aren't they more committed to social change? Don't ask Sheryl Kujawa unless you are prepared for a challenging reply.

"They aren't pod people, they weren't beamed down here!" she responds to the frequently voiced complaints. "Young people are who they are because of us. Are we calling young people to a higher sense of moral conscience than we, in fact, are willing to live out?"

Kujawa, the national Episcopal Church's program director for Ministries with Young People, believes that the church must recognize its own reflection in its youth.

"We have to look at our own conversion issues — personal and social," Kujawa says. "It is very difficult to hear people criticize the spirituality of young people when they haven't moved to social conversion themselves — when they think, 'I'm a nice person and that's all that matters,' and they design programs to keep young people thinking like that, and then wonder why they don't want to make a better world."

If the church wants young people to be socially conscious, inclusive and respectful of others, it must start by respecting and including them, Kujawa insists.

When they raise questions about violence or sexual ethics or forms of worship, "we don't always want to talk about it, and one way is to maintain all the control," she says. "A lot of our pedagogy

*Young people weren't beamed down here! They are who they are because of us.*



Sheryl Kujawa

## Youth: 'They aren't pod people.'

by Marianne Arbogast

is stuck in keeping young people passive and therefore marginal. If young people were empowered to talk about and work for their own needs, I'm not so sure the adult church would be willing to accept that. Adults would have to give up the ability to make all the substantive decisions, to have all the worship meet our needs, to frame which questions are important."

Taking young people seriously would require a far greater commitment of time, energy and resources than the church has so far been willing to provide, she believes.

"Because the Episcopal Church does not do a lot to nurture leadership for ministry with young people, there are about 10 job openings for every applicant," she says. "There is a lot of rhetoric in this country on the importance of children and youth, but work with youth is not seen as a status occupation."

Instead, she says, it is relegated to seminarians and committed but overworked volunteers, or regarded as a stepping stone to bigger and better things.

Kujawa, whose seminary field education placement with a youth group in 1981 sparked a long-term vocational commitment, views her ministry as "a privilege."

"People have told me I could be a normal priest," she says, her voice deadpan. With five graduate degrees, including a recent doctorate in American Religious History from Boston College, Kujawa clearly could take her pick of a wide range of ministerial posts. "But being engaged with young people this long, it has become not just a placement — it has changed completely the way I think about ministry and leadership, the way I view church, the way I interact with people of all ages.

"I've learned much more about how

*Witnesses,  
the quick and the dead*

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

the various kinds of oppressions in our society impact marginalized people — they impact young people profoundly. Once you get working with young people, you really become part of their lives. It goes beyond program and retreats — it's an opening up into the human condition."

Young people need adults who are willing to listen and support them in their own vocations, Kujawa says.

"I was fortunate enough to have mentors who were willing to spend the time and energy to work with me as companions on the journey," she says. "They never told me what to do, but were willing to entertain my questions."

Her Roman Catholic parents were a strong influence in her life, Kujawa says. "They had a deep faith and tried to live their life by those principles, and they were always very encouraging of their children. They thought that girls or boys could do anything they wanted, and they would support them in their life plans."

What Kujawa wanted, from the time she was five, was to be a priest. "The ordained people I was around were ebullient; they enjoyed what they were doing, they had purpose and commitment — that and the clothes, I liked the outfits," she adds.

A family friend, the dean of a Roman Catholic seminary, encouraged her conviction that women could be priests, but it was not till she read of the first ordinations of women in the Episcopal Church that she saw it as a genuine option.

After graduating from Episcopal Divinity School, Kujawa served as youth coordinator for the Diocese of Massachusetts, and then for the province, before joining the national church staff.

Kujawa oversees the cluster of offices which includes children's ministries, youth ministries, and ministries with young adults, and takes particular responsibility for ministries with high school age youth.

She coordinates the triennial Episcopal Youth Event, which brings together high school students from almost every diocese in the church for "an experience of participating in the Episcopal Church in the fullest sense." Students take a major role in planning the sessions.

"At the last Event, I had to be out in public very little — my role was really to support people around the edges," Kujawa reports. "That meant to me I did my job."

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*I've learned much more about how the various kinds of oppressions in our society impact marginalized people — they impact young people profoundly.*

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Inclusion and empowerment are central themes in Kujawa's ministry.

"Everything we develop is based on a shared leadership model with young people — our bias is to have more young people than not," she explains. "We try to develop schedules and lifestyles so that how late we stay up, and who calls us when, is not built around standard business procedure. We have to stay up and talk to people at 2 a.m. because that's when they're up. It's an access issue."

With the Youth Ministries staff, Kujawa has developed and followed a strategic plan mandating racial and ethnic diversity in all aspects of national youth ministry.

"In terms of appointments, committees and design teams, we want a major representation of people of color, so that European Americans are one ethnic group among many, and there's not just one of anybody," she says.

After nine years of effort, she reports some victories. The program "has changed the ways significant adult leaders and

young people think about issues of race and culture," she says. "In this generation, we now have people coming in on the national level who know of no other way to think, but to look around the room to see who is represented and who is not."

One-third of the participants in the last National Episcopal Youth Event were people of color, Kujawa adds.

Kujawa fields numerous phone calls from parents and church leaders looking for help with youth ministry.

"People are very, very concerned about the nurture of their children," she says. "I am glad to see the interest, but we haven't moved yet to make the changes needed to find leaders to meet the needs."

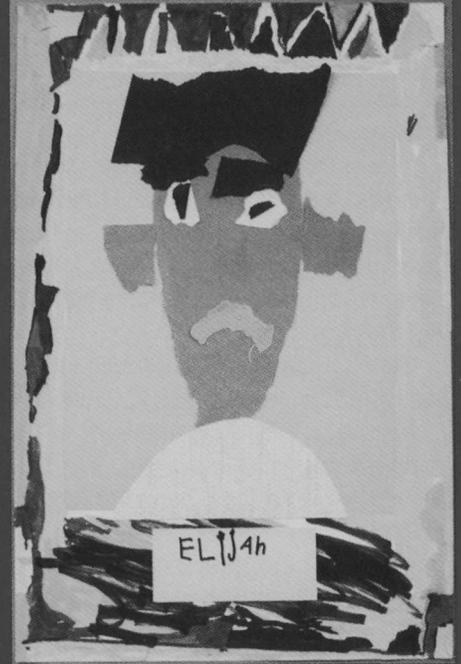
She urges all adults to consider what they might have to offer young people.

"The people I know who are good mentors have more people who want to engage in this process than they could ever listen to," she says. "There is a great need for healthy adults to do youth ministry — not people who can't do any other job, or are psychologically unbalanced, or think they are adolescents themselves. We typically recruit parents, but young people benefit from adults of all types and ages — not just 24-year-olds with guitars. Anybody who is thoughtful and considerate and likes kids should think about it." **TV**

## **SITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

*thewitness.org*

The new *Witness* Web site is in the final stages of construction and will be up soon! When it's completed, our Web page will contain excerpts from our most recent issue; a list of available back issues; news about our contributing editors, artists and staff; and other information about *The Witness*. You'll also be able to e-mail us your comments. Coming soon!



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