The Witness

Unmasking the death penalty

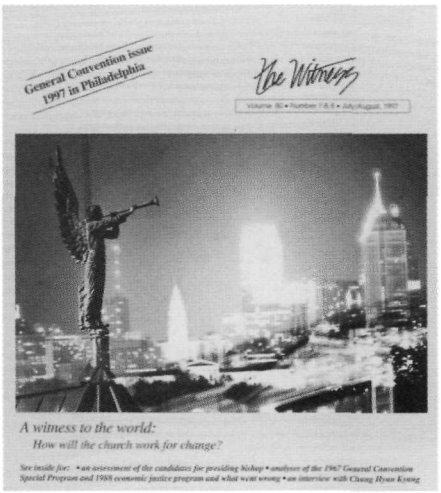
Volume 80 • Number 9 • September, 1997

Economic justice

I WRITE TO CORRECT EGREGIOUS misconceptions portrayed by Camille Colatosti in her July/August article "A Vision Betrayed." I would like to believe that *The Witness* was simply uninformed about the economic justice program at the Episcopal Church Center. But since I was interviewed for the article and provided considerable information, I find its shortcomings inexplicable. Emmett Jarrett's article in the same issue says that "The Episcopal Church's national 'ministry of community reinvestment and economic justice' is no more." That is simply false, which I made clear when I was interviewed.

Executive Council in 1989 set aside $7,000,000 from its investment portfolio for alternative investments. Half of that money was for loans to be made in implementation of the Economic Justice Resolution passed at Detroit in 1988. The other $3.5 million was to invest in similar projects through the Council's Trust Fund Committee. The latter was set up separately because, prior to the 1988 General Convention, the Executive Council had a working committee for alternative investments already in place, so with or without the Michigan resolution, the Council would have established an alternative investments program. Both loan programs are made at below market rates.

In my interview I provided specific examples of loans that have been made. They include loans to the dioceses of Los Angeles ($100,000) and Michigan ($300,000). So when Ms. Colatosti writes about the many good things that have happened at the local level, including in these two dioceses, it is notable that the national Church has financially supported many of these efforts through its alternative investment program. I would also note that the national Church funded the work of Gloria Brown for a full year with the diocese of Los Angeles as she organized their now successful diocesan credit union.



Further, I informed Ms. Colatosti that Executive Council also invests $3,000,000 in minority bank deposits. This later investment goes back many years. When you add to that the Executive Council's longstanding work in corporate activism through its Social Responsibility in Investment committee, the national Church provides a very fine model of economic justice for the dioceses to emulate.

Ms. Colatosti's article laments the national Church's failure to invest in the Community Bank of the Bay project. In fact, an offer to invest several hundred thousand dollars was made, but the bank was not really seeking an investment. They wanted a grant. Regrettably, social justice grants were eliminated by the 1994 General Convention. The bank's director, Ed Voris, may think an investment and a grant are synonymous terms, but that is not the general interpretation.

The article also cites the embezzlement by Ellen Cooke as somehow related to the alleged failure of the economic justice program. In fact, as heinous as the embezzlement was, none of the money available for alternative investments was affected.

I believe the Convention in 1988 made a strategic mistake when it called for raising $24,000,000 over six years. Instead, it should have called on all congregations, institutions and dioceses to set aside five percent (or three percent or seven percent) of their investment portfolios for alternative investments. This would potentially amount to hundreds of millions of dollars, far exceeding the $24,000,000 goal. It would have provided a concrete source for carrying out the objectives of the Michigan resolution. (The Convention should have remembered from Venture in Mission that people won't raise money for the "national" Church, *but they will raise it at home and give* it away, or lend it, if they control where it goes.) I do not make this observation in hindsight. I said so to the Michigan proponents before the Detroit Convention.

I am sadly aware of some of the frustrations experienced by members of the EJIC committee mentioned with specificity in the article. But, even though Bishop McGehee regrets that none of his recommendations were appointed, his suffragan bishop and a prominent lay leader in his diocese were, one as chair and the other as secretary. Michigan was hardly ignored.

Finally, it was the EJIC committee itself that recommended it be reorganized as a new Economic Justice network. I think that is the right way to go to spread this ministry. And in this, its first year, it will receive a majority of its funding from Executive Council, and is in the next triennial budget. Peace and Justice Ministries is already providing consulting staff to the network and, as Arthur Lloyd says, "we have been working very cooperatively."

I hope the new network will help the whole church to be as proactive as the model of economic justice already set in place by Executive Council, which embraces the spirit and visions of the Michigan resolution.

Brian J. Grieves
The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.
New York, NY

Beyond inclusion

THANK YOU FOR THE JUNE, '97 *Witness* with reports from the "Beyond Inclusion" Conference at All Saints', Pasadena in April. For those who attended, it is a record of a great experience. For those of us unable to attend, it serves to give us an overview and excellent insights and quotes.

Mary Eunice Oliver
San Diego, CA

MY ONLY COMPLAINT ABOUT *The Witness* is that when it comes it really messes up my day — I have to read it right away! The June issue is great — a subject dear to my heart. You do a marvelous job.

Sally Head
Ann Arbor, MI

ALWAYS FINE ISSUES, but in particular, the June, 1997 issue is outstanding. In working in a graduate program with prison inmates, no issue is more conflicting and frustrating for the faculty than that of homosexuality. In the prison context, the issue is distorted by the reality of rape as well as traditional standards in Muslim and Christian communities.

But the reason for this note is to request you to send a copy of the issue to a recent graduate who needs very much to have the support of these articles.

George W. Webber
Professor of Urban Ministry
New York Theological Seminary
New York, NY

Leadership

THE MAY ISSUE OF *THE WITNESS* IS outstanding!! Parker Palmer and Margaret Wheatley are gifts to us all; thank you for publishing their material.

John P. Boucher
St. Thomas Episcopal Church
Columbus, GA

WOW! WHAT A WONDERFUL ISSUE! (May 1997) I just finished reading it — some of the articles twice. Not only is it a great report as to "*where* we are" as Church but it provides a great measuring stick for now (how far we have come) and in the future. I have felt for a long time that we (I am an Episcopalian) need to start defining and structuring our ministries by what needs to be done rather than by an outdated structure of more or less enclosed, exclusive parishes. Lay people are already trying to do this. Clergy, too, but they are hampered by canonical, traditional role definition and, often, local "letters of mutual agreement/employment" contracts which reflect the above. Thank you, *Witness* and all the authors of the articles.

Judy Yeakel
Langley, WA

Witness praise

GREAT SPIRIT — GREAT MAGAZINE — Thanks.

Margaret V. Howard
Middletown, NY

PLEASE RENEW MY LONG-LAPSED subscription. I miss you.

Jo-Ann R. Murphy
Transfiguration Church
Towaco, NJ

Awards dinner

I AM QUITE EXCITED to know that you are honoring Leon Modeste for directing the General Convention Special Program. Those were exciting times and I was his secretary. This honor is long overdue.

Sonia P. Omulepu
World Council of Churches
New York, NY

BRAVO ON AWARD RECIPIENTS this year at G.C.!! I was Leon's deputy for those six years of GCSP — wouldn't miss this moment of long delayed recognition for him!

Barry Menuez
Poughkeepsie, NY

Classifieds

Position open

A small family parish in the Adirondacks, an older congregation with some young families, is seeking a part-time rector to help us meet our pastoral and spiritual needs. Our congregation has grown in the last 2-1/2 years due to strong lay participation and enthusiastic supply priests. A profile will be sent upon receipt of your resume. Contact: Search Committee, Church of the Good Shepherd, P.O. Box 146, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

Urban ministry program

The *Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education* in Chicago offers a six-month M.Div. internship program beginning Jan. 1, 1998 which integrates ministry experience with a full semester of course work. Classes include: "Urban Principalities and the Spirit of the City," "Christology and Culture," "Church-based Community Development," "Dimensions and Dynamics of Urban Ministry," and "For Such a Time as This: an Agenda of Hope for the City." Contact: Bill Wylie-Kellermann at SCUPE, 200 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 (312-726-1200).

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Stringfellow book

Conversations at a 1996 conference on William Stringfellow, co-sponsored by *The Witness*, have been gathered together by Andrew W. McThenia, Jr. and Bill Wylie-Kellermann in a new book, *The Legacy of William Stringfellow*. Contributors include Eugene Rivers, Jim Wallis, Elizabeth McAlister, Nane Alejandrez and Michael Lerner, among others. The volume collects the remarks of the principal speakers as well as dialogue among participants. Send $5 to *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210.

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 Witness

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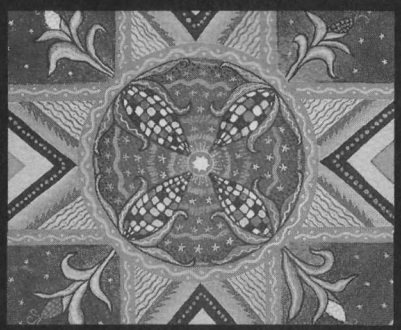

Cover: Residents of Congregacion Anahuac carry the coffin of Irineo Tristan Montoya in his home town, Friday June 20, 1997, in Veracruz, Mexico. Montoya, 30, was given a lethal injection in Huntsville, Tex. for the 1985 robbery and stabbing death of motorist John Kilheffer near Brownsville.

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.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: $25 per year, $3 per copy. Foreign subscriptions add $5 per year. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Third Class mail *does not* forward. Call or send your new mailing address to *The Witness*.

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Killing for community?

by Marianne Arbogast

A photo of a funeral procession for a Mexican man executed in Texas (see cover) ran in a June 22 edition of the *Dallas Star-Telegram.* The accompanying story reported that hundreds of mourners had "mobbed the bridge over the Rio Grande" to meet the body of Irineo Montoya, "to salute him and curse the country that killed him." The rage of the crowd was such that American tourists were warned not to cross the border.

This hero's welcome afforded a convicted murderer no doubt mystified many Texans. The case was not overtly political. Why, below the border, was it seen in so different a light? Although questions were raised about legal procedure (Did Montoya understand the English confession he signed? Was he adequately represented?) a sociologist interviewed for the story saw them in the context of far broader dynamics. For Mexicans, said Rodolfo Stavenhagen of the Colegio de Mexico, the killing of Montoya symbolized "racism, marginalization, the exclusion of Mexicans in a system that is controlled by others."

As Timothy McVeigh (along with many more anonymous exiles) takes up residence on death row, as state after state resumes the legal killing of its citizens, the image of Montoya's funeral might serve as an icon of truths best grasped at the margins.

In *Violence Unveiled,* Gil Bailie's book exploring René Girard's theories on the roots of human culture and the culture-shattering implications of the cross of Christ, Bailie analyzes the death penalty as an instance of "sacred violence" (p. 15). State-sanctioned executions, while purporting to serve justice and protect society from threatening individuals, in reality arise from deeper, murkier levels of social necessity, Bailie believes. The condemned person serves as a lightning rod for the tensions within a society, uniting it against a common scapegoat.

From the vantage point of the excluded, this is what Montoya's mourners could see that his executioners could not. Intuitively, they knew that his death was not just about the murder of a Texan motorist. They knew it was linked to the repression of immigrants in the U.S. and the vast discrepancies in U.S. and Mexican standards of living.

As Steve Charleston puts it, the death penalty is "a cork floating on a sea of troubles" (p.12). In a nation torn by racism, economic inequality and political instability, the scapegoats are predictable. "Immigrants, political dissidents, racial minorities: These are the usual suspects to be blamed when a culture begins to fear itself."

In this light, it is perhaps less surprising than it seems that a band of small, rural Christian communities, heirs to a German peace church tradition, are taking to the streets in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Philadelphia radio-journalist and former Black Panther on death row in Pennsylvania [see *TW*, 1-2/95]. The Bruderhof communities, who approach the Amish in their degree of separation from the surrounding culture, may be well situated to discern the dark forces that closed in on Abu-Jamal and the MOVE community he publicly defended. Bruderhof member Sam Hine questions whether MOVE's real offense was establishing — as the Bruderhof have done — "a base from which to question the present world order."

None of this is to deny that there are individuals who have wreaked inestimable harm and continue to pose a grave threat to others, far less to suggest that they be excused or ignored. It *is* to suggest the death-penalty bandwagon can only carry us further down the path which has led to the current level of violence in our midst — crushing not only those whose chaotic violence threatens our peace, but those who, like Abu-Jamal, raise questions about the present world "order" which could help light the path to true justice.

It is possible, as Ruth Morris shows us, to respond to acts of violence in ways that honor both the needs of victims and the humanity of offenders (p. 18). Such alternatives arise most often in places where community is most intact. They clearly require time, hard work and the committed participation of many people.

We can continue to accelerate the rate at which we expel from our midst the McVeighs, the Montoyas and others who reveal to us, in varying ways, the underside of our society. But as long as we are blind to the lessons they bring us, we will not have the "closure" people want desperately enough to kill for. Alternatively, we can reaffirm our faith in a radically different community from that which forms around common enemies and common scapegoats — a community that might bear some resemblence to that gathered around the Crucified One. TW

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness.*

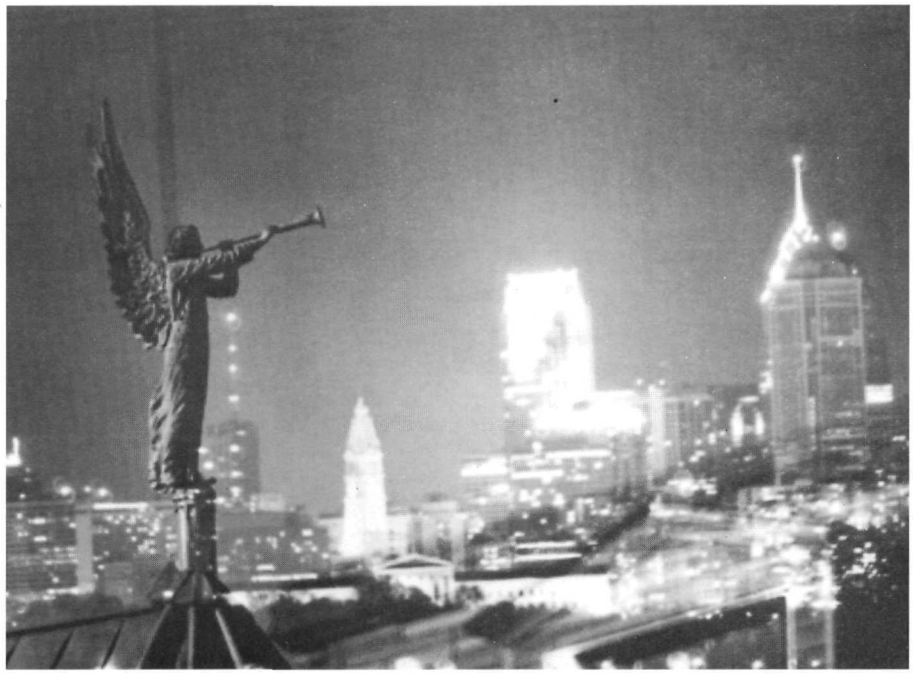
editor's note

An antidote for disappointment

by Julie A. Wortman

During this past summer's 72nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in Philadelphia, a friend staffing the Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF) booth came over to *The Witness* booth with a dumbfounded expression on his face. It seems that in the course of browsing through EPF's literature a recent visitor to the booth had been startled to find some anti-death penalty material. Waving one of the offending flyers in our friend's face, the visitor had reduced him to a state of bewildered shock when she had exclaimed, "But without the death penalty Christians wouldn't have a religion!"

Amusing as such who-would-believe-it? moments can be in the retelling, they are also sobering because they represent only the tip of the iceberg of what so frequently disappoints us about the witness of our fellow Christians. And at a concentrated gathering of church folks like the Episcopal Church's triennial General Convention, the dose of disappointment can be debilitating. In fact, I think what might be called "disappointment overdose" was as much the reason I left Philadelphia drained and dragging after nearly two weeks as that those weeks occurred during the dead of a sweltering summer and were filled with 16-hour days spent in the artificial atmosphere of airless, often windowless convention center and hotel meeting rooms both tracking the progress of church decisionmaking through a convoluted legislative process and attending a steady stream of special receptions, banquets and worship services sponsored by the church's many mission-oriented networks and advocacy organizations.



The Philadelphia skyline, taken from the roof of the Church of the Advocate, site of *The Witness'* General Convention dinner honoring Leon Modeste, Verna Dozier, Coleman McGehee and the Ojibwe singers. Charles F. Penniman, Jr.

I'm aware that many veteran Episcopal Church observors of a progressive bent were not disappointed at all by this General Convention — and, in truth, as much of our post-Convention coverage indicates (see pp. 21-28), the Convention made many encouraging decisions. For example, progressives in the House of Bishops managed to hang together strongly enough to avert, however narrowly, the election of a conservative presiding bishop. Likewise, the Convention outlawed discrimination against women in the ordination process, flagged as a desireable priority for mission outreach the combatting of the negative effects of "welfare reform," moved forward with plans for a "Jubilee 2000" commitment to forgiveness of third-world debt, environmental stewardship and human liberation, provided additional support for anti-racism efforts and moved forward on deconstructing the church's heterosexist biases. The Convention also approved the formation of an autonomous Central American province made up of the Episcopal Church dioceses in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama, in addition to the already autonomous Diocese of Costa Rica — an action for which these dioceses have long worked and about which their representatives in Philadelphia were clearly enthusiastic.

So from what does my disappointment stem? It is not just that one Convention visitor could justify state-sponosred executions by appealing to an atonement-skewed theology that finds Jesus'

continued on page 28

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

The Prisoners

by Richard Schaaf

for Victor Jara

The guards
take their orders
from Pinochet, Marcos, Thieu ...

'If the prisoners don't talk,
pour pails down their throats'

It's torture.
The prisoners
they swell up like toads
but
They don't talk.

Victor, do you hear them
in the National Stadium
thousands, still
singing, clapping
their rough hands resounding over the Andes ...
From Santiago, in the spring,
a friend
witnesses this,
writes:

'In the prison, anyway, my friend ... witnessed
an execution (more than one, but this as you'll
see was something special). What happened was,
one of the soldiers in the firing squad refused to
shoot the man. And what happened then, was,
he was put up against the wall alongside the
prisoner, and together they were shot. You begin
to wonder, what kind of human being is this?

That he would choose to die, and die obscurely,
rather than kill a man. It's strange that there
should ever have been gods, they seem so chintzy
in the light of something like this.'

we read this, Victor,
while you sing 'Las Casitas Del Barrio Alto'
on the stereo,
So high spirited and true
even the children go around
singing it by heart

—*from* Poetry Like Bread: Poets of the Political Imagination, *edited by Martin Espada (Curbstone Press, 1994).*

"Cousins of the Amish" join urban radicals in death penalty protest

by Sam Hine

On May 13, 1985 a police helicopter dropped a firebomb on an intentional community in Philadelphia, Pa. Police had surrounded the house on Osage Ave. belonging to the MOVE organization, showered it with machine gun fire and attempted to drown the residents out with deluge hoses. Unsuccessful at that, they set the building on fire, conspired with the city fire commissioner to let it burn, and shot at MOVE members who tried to escape the inferno. Eleven people, five of them children, died in the blaze.

MOVE's crime: agitating neighbors with a political message about the oppressive injustice they lived under as black people in an American city. Unfortunately, the fire department let the fire get out of control, and another 60 homes in the neighborhood burned down.

Twelve years later, the emergence of another community movement out of the woodwork of traditional Anabaptism into the heart of the struggle for social justice has people intrigued and baffled. Members of the Bruderhof, a pacifist Christian community movement of approximately 2,500 people, were once best known in Pennsylvania as cousins of the Amish. Today they are better known — on the streets, in the halls of government and in the prisons — as vocal opponents of capital punishment. And, by no coincidence, they have found themselves shoulder to shoulder with the survivors of the government's war on MOVE.

Sam Hine lives at Spring Valley Bruderhof and is a journalism student at Northeastern University in Boston.

What could have brought these "white-bread fundamentalists" into an alliance with the anti-authoritarian, even revolutionary, urban MOVE community? As a Bruderhof member, I'll try to explain.

The Bruderhof movement started in Germany in 1920, came to the U.S. in 1954, and has grown to eight communities: three in New York, two in Pennsylvania, one in Connecticut and two in England. Sharing money, houses, land and work, we try to show our love to Jesus by loving and serving others. We believe Christ brought us together in community to be a city on a hill, a light in the darkness.

Actually, our political activism is nothing new. The Bruderhof resisted Nazism in Germany to the point of expulsion. Our communities housed refugees during World War II and helped displaced persons after the war. Members of the Bruderhof marched in Selma during the civil rights movement. We protested the American massacre of civilians during the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars, and we continue to demand an end to the economic sanctions that have killed more than a million Iraqi in the last seven years. A contingent of Bruderhof school children accompanied a "friendshipment" to Cuba, breaking the U.S. blockade to bring humanitarian aid to the island.

We've felt a particular urgency lately to protest the death penalty, partly because it's close to home — people are being killed by our government, in our name — but mostly because so many people who consider themselves Christian wholeheartedly endorse it.

We've felt a particular urgency lately to protest the death penalty, partly because it's close to home — people are being killed by our government, in our name — but mostly because so many people who consider themselves Christian wholeheartedly endorse it.

Busloads from various Bruderhof communities have attended rallies and marches calling for the abolition of the death penalty. In 1996, we sponsored the National Commission on Capital Punishment (NCCP) human rights hearing held in Philadelphia's city hall, where advocates and opponents of capital punishment gave testimony on its effects. This summer, our children decided to organize a "Children's Crusade," a three-day march from our Pennsylvania communities to death row, 30 miles away.

The story of MOVE and the Bruderhof contains an even more improbable twist, because the man who brought them together was none other than Mumia Abu-Jamal, once a convicted "cop-killer" forgotten on death row, now undeniably the world's most famous political prisoner [see *TW*, 1-2/95].

Abu-Jamal was convicted of the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. He had won acclaim and was growing in stature as a radio journalist, until he condemned the police's treatment of the MOVE organization on his radio program, and chose to sacrifice his job rather than his principles. While driving a cab to support his fam-

ily, he saw his brother in an altercation with a police officer and rushed to intervene. When other police arrived at the scene, both Faulkner and Abu-Jamal had been shot.

After winning a conviction, the prosecution presented Abu-Jamal's involvement in the Black Panther Party as a reason why he deserved to die. Since then, witnesses have claimed police coerced them into implicating Abu-Jamal in the crime, but despite growing evidence of his innocence, the state has failed to grant him a retrial. Judge Albert Sabo, who presided over the case and appeals hearings, has sentenced more people to death than any other judge in the U.S.

The Bruderhof's decision to take up the cause of Mumia Abu-Jamal was controversial, but it was also inevitable. Abu-Jamal is caged less than an hour from the nearest Bruderhof community, in a prison our brothers and sisters visit regularly.

Bruderhof members first read about Abu-Jamal in a May 1995 article in *The Progressive*. That month we met some of his supporters at a march against the death penalty at the infamous Sing Sing prison in Ossining, N.Y., where the Rosenbergs were executed. Many of us read Abu-Jamal's book *Live From Death Row* (Addison-Wesley, 1995), and our eyes were opened to the cruel realities of that other America most of us never see.

Less than a month after Abu-Jamal's book hit the shelves, Governor Tom Ridge signed his death warrant. Convinced that whether he was guilty or innocent, Abu-Jamal had never received a fair trial, the Bruderhof put its united force into publicizing the injustice. At the time, we didn't know that during the following months Abu-Jamal would become the focal point of a millions-strong international movement to free political prisoners, to abolish the death penalty and to reveal the powers working behind it.

In January 1997, the Bruderhof's publishing house, Plough, brought out Abu-Jamal's second book from prison, *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience*. In *Death Blossoms*, Abu-Jamal tells how, after much searching, he found a spiritual family in MOVE founder John Africa's revolutionaries and their religion of Life. Because convicted MOVE members are barred from visiting prisons, Abu-Jamal asked Steve Wiser, a Bruderhof pastor, to be his spiritual adviser. Though Abu-Jamal remains an incisive critic of institutional Christianity, both he and the Bruderhof have benefitted enormously from this relationship.

Within our communities, we discussed associating with a decidedly "unchristian" group like MOVE, and decided to send a delegation to Philadelphia to meet them personally. Why, we wanted to know, do they say "Long Live John Africa," when, by all accounts, he perished in the 1985 fire?

Members of the Christian Bruderhof community protest the planned execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Harvey Finkle/Impact Visuals

We've got to know our MOVE brothers and sisters well since that first meeting. The spirit of John Africa lives on, for sure. It lives on in nine men and women in prison, serving 30 to 100 years each for the murder of a police officer killed in an assault on MOVE headquarters in 1978, who nevertheless radiate courage and hope. It lives on in Abu-

Do political, economic and religious power-mongers feel threatened by community? By people looking out for each other on their own, people with a base from which to question the present world order?

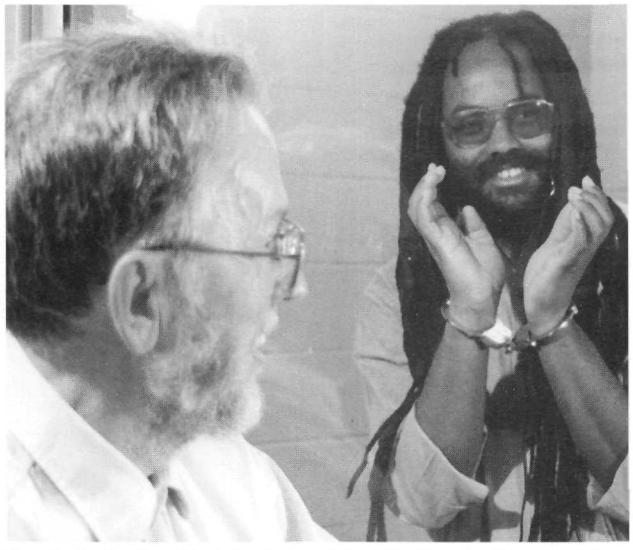
Jamal, who defies the jaws of the state's death machine with his pen, embracing life in all its depth and fullness and illuminating a struggle that goes beyond him, beyond even the abolition of the death penalty, to the roots of the spirit of death that has captured our nation.

Despite the questions of faith and practice, despite the allegations that they were a cult or espoused "false teachings," MOVE's story resonated with ours. Nazi storm troopers surrounded our German community in 1937 and forced everyone to evacuate in 24 hours, because our school wouldn't accept Nazi teachers and our young men wouldn't serve in Hitler's army. Unlike the Bruderhof, however, MOVE claimed a right to self-defense. Besieged, they refused to give up their home — and suffered the bitter consequences.

The MOVE bombing wasn't an isolated incident. In 1993, we watched the Branch Davidian's Waco community burn to the ground under federal siege. Most of us, while we felt the threat of such unrestrained police power, were too busy disassociating ourselves from this cultish aberration to raise an objection. When the media hype subsided, however, we realized that the Branch Davidians weren't destroyed simply because they believed David Koresh was the messiah, or because their arsenal posed a threat to national security.

Why, then? Do political, economic and religious power mongers feel threatened by community? By people looking out for each other on their own, people with a base from which to question the present world order? As we watched federal agents stake out the Freemen in Montana, then Texas separatists, unspoken questions rose in our minds: Who will be next? And who will object? Are we going to wait till they come for us?

In rejecting violence and private property, we take inspiration from the first Christian church in Jerusalem and from the radical Anabaptist fringe of the Reformation. The first Christians, who like us lived in community, were hounded by authorities, hung on crosses and fed to lions for refusing to stop "preaching that name." Like these earliest Christians, thousands of Anabaptists sold their land and pooled their possessions — and met execution at the hands of political and ecclesial authorities.



Bruderhof elder Christoph Arnold with Mumia Abu-Jamal
Paul Button

MOVE's story resonated with ours. Nazi storm troopers surrounded our German community in 1937 and forced everyone to evacuate in 24 hours, because our school wouldn't accept Nazi teachers and our young men wouldn't serve in Hitler's army. Unlike the Bruderhof, however, MOVE claimed a right to self-defense. Besieged, they refused to give up their home — and suffered the bitter consequences.

Their witness impelled Bruderhof founder Eberhard Arnold and his small German community, in 1930, to join the Hutterian descendants of these radicals, now living in farming communities in western Canada and the U.S. Ironically, as the Bruderhof's commitment to oppose evil becomes more visible in the 1990s, our Hutterian brethren and other Anabaptist groups have castigated us for taking our gospel to the social and political spheres — for calling society, government and (God forbid) churches to repentance and the promise of the coming kingdom.

The Bruderhof's intensified activism has brought on outside opposition as well, both insidious and blatant. Long-time readers of our quarterly magazine, *The Plough,* canceled their subscriptions or wrote letters expressing concern, alarm or anger. During the NCCP hearings in Philadelphia, the Fraternal Order of Police joined with an anti-Bruderhof hate group in an effort to publicly discredit us.

Where do we find hope to carry on? Often, we turn to Isaiah's prophesies, with their promise of God's future kingdom of justice. We sincerely believe that this kingdom is just waiting to happen, that the triumph of good is inevitable.

And, quite simply, protesting adds meaning to our struggle. We relish the flavor it brings to our lives. The freedom to speak our minds, to flex our demo-

cratic muscles. The satisfaction of being heard, of joining hands with others who want the same thing. We rejoice in small victories. Time and again, we've seen our efforts stay the executioner's hand, if only temporarily.

We don't know what tomorrow will bring, or where it will take us. We've got our hands full meeting the challenges that arise. In the past year we've sent people to Australia, Bolivia, Cuba, Germany, Haiti, Israel, Hong Kong, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russia and South Africa to meet interested groups who share at least a piece of our vision.

This year, the example of the early Christians has challenged us once again. After reading that they not only took care of their own, but eradicated poverty in the cities where they lived, we resolved to do the same. Starting with our own neighborhoods, we're trying to bring the good news, not with gushy words, but with our hands and tools and time. It may be a drop in the bucket, but it's a beginning.

The Bruderhof is still finding its place in a struggle much bigger than itself. Our belief in the sacredness of life compels us to oppose war, euthanasia and abortion as well as the death penalty, so we often find ourselves homeless on the political spectrum and short on allies.

Building community remains our most potent resistance, and our primary goal. We seek to rediscover unity in a fragmented society. To practice faithfulness and sexual purity in a culture of immorality. To create a haven for children in a world inhospitable to the childlike spirit. To affirm life in the midst of death.

There have always been political dissidents, and always will be. But the world also needs a people willing to turn their backs on everything that is evil in themselves and in society, a people who believe that Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount were meant to guide our lives today. TW

The deafening deep

An underwater sonar defense system being developed by the U.S. Navy could have a deafening effect on whales and other marine animals.

The Surveillance Towed Array Sonar Sytem, Low Frequency Active (LFA), designed to detect a special breed of silent submarines with an intense, low-frequency tone, will rev up to an estimated 235 decibels — possibly enough to damage a whale's hearing — according to Bob Holmes in New Scientist (March 1, 1997). And loss of hearing is only part of the problem. In order to avoid annoying sounds, some marine mammals may alter their migration patterns and abandon feeding grounds. Loud noises may also drown out courtship calls, disrupting breeding patterns.

While alarm about the LFA is new, noise pollution in our waterways is not. Evelyn Adams, reporting in Orion (Summer, 1996), notes that since World War II, "the noise level of the oceans has increased 15 to 30 decibels due to mechanized human activity, which has reduced the suitable area available to marine animals by 25 percent or more."

— Rebecca Scheib, *Utne Reader* (July-August, 1997)

New H-bomb

The smoke of "nuclear disarmament" has just been cleared by a blast from the Air Force. The Pentagon has deployed a new nuclear bomb called the "B61 (Mod-11)." The announcement of the earth-penetrating bomb has caused a minor shock wave in diplomatic and arms control circles, since it flies in the face of official pronouncements, legal obligations and public opinion.

A senior military officer said last March, "With the B-2 [Stealth nuclear bomber], the deeply buried target-killer will come on board." He was referring to the new, 340-kiloton "B61-11" H-bomb, which is designed to burrow 50 feet into the ground before detonating. The B61s are said to replace about 50 nine-megaton B53s which are still in use today.

The B61 "is a smaller yield replacement for an older, dirtier, bigger, less safe bomb," says Ashton B. Carter, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, who spoke to the *New York Times*. The *Times* also said the new B61 would cause "relatively little surface damage." However, an accompanying graph showed it would spread "lethal radiation" for at least ten square miles. This "smaller" bomb, in the absurd jargon of nuclear war, has 27 times the force of the Hiroshima blast — the comparatively tiny atomic bomb (with an explosive power of 12.5 kilotons) that killed 140,000 people.

The military brass counter charges that the B61 is new, and say it's just a "refit" which will perform the same cold war mission as the B53. If the Pentagon is to believed, the job of the B61 is to threaten or attack Russia. However, critics point to official statements that imply that the real purpose of the B61 is to threaten the poor non-nuclear countries. The same stories that disclosed the new B61, also mentioned that "rogue" nations (always Libya, Iraq and famine-plagued North Korea) are believed to have burrowed into the earth to protect military sites.

— John M. LaForge, Nukewatch

Remembering Dorothy Day

November 8, 1997 marks the centenary of the birth of Dorothy Day, founder with Peter Marin of the Catholic Worker movement. In anticipation of the centenary celebration, Harper Collins has re-issued Day's 1952 autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* and Warner Brothers will release the home video edition of "Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story." For ordering information on the video, which will be available in early October, call 1-800-218-1903.

Short takes

The powers behind the death penalty

by Steven Charleston

As we come to the close of the twentieth century, American society is once again caught in a cycle of fear. The depth of this fear can be measured by many complex social, economic and political yardsticks, but if we search for a simple indicator, I believe we can find it in the debate over the death penalty.

Communities that are relatively calm, stable and secure do not as a rule employ increasingly repressive and violent means of insuring their survival. The reverse, I believe, is just as true: societies that are insecure, fractured, and volatile consistently turn to ever more brutal ways of keeping themselves alive.

The death penalty is a cork floating on a sea of troubles. It shows to what extent we will go as a community to preserve the status quo of our social order. Beneath the surface, upholding capital punishment, are the constantly shifting, liquid currents of economic dislocation, political disintegration, racial inequality and, finally, of criminal justice breakdown. These patterns are as predictable as they are visible. They chart a clear direction. They show us that our society is drifting toward chaos.

Capital punishment, therefore, is the wrong debate about the right problem. The issue is justice, but justice on a level far deeper than legal execution. The irony is: The more we claim the death penalty as a legal means of deterrence to crime, the more we subvert the true debate over justice as a deterrence to community collapse. While the average citizen feels a growing uneasiness about how things are going on the local level, the authorities attempt to reassure the populace by calling for more firepower, for policing agencies and tougher penalties for an ever expanding list of criminals. That list itself begins to single out certain target communities that are identified as the source of social breakdown. Immigrants, political dissidents, racial minorities: These are the usual suspects to be blamed when a culture begins to fear itself. In response, citizens are asked to believe that if only there were more police, more jails, and more executions, then the tide would turn. Shifting public attention from the deeper justice issues to the shallower formula of scapegoats and promises of restoring law and order accomplishes two primary goals for the defenders of the status quo: It distracts the focus of the public debate from the root causes of community dissolution and it justifies the expenditure of more and more resources to preserve the power of those in charge.

Societies that are insecure, fractured, and volatile consistently turn to ever more brutal ways of keeping themselves alive.

There is a subtle escalation principle at work in this process. As the currents of fear rise, they lift up an apparent logic not only for the death penalty, but for a much broader range of legal restrictions that increasingly limits an otherwise democratic society. A kind of social *quid pro quo* results: Citizens are told that if they will sacrifice a few more of their traditional rights and privileges, then the return will be safety and peace. Fearful, people make the trade. Gradually, one small sacrifice of privacy after another, the community retreats into a supposed safe haven. Suburban forts are constructed to protect the affluent. Whole sections of urban areas are designated as combat zones.

But does the trade-off really work? Are we any more stable and secure in America today after hundreds of executions? Does the loss of our freedom as a people truly buy us peace and a brighter future? Or are we simply sinking because we are being fooled into believing that a cork can support our weight in the midst of a storm?

As a society, I believe we are repeating the same patterns of fear and repression that have marked all declining communities throughout human history. There is nothing unique about our situation, except for drugs and technology. The drugs make our predicament far more accelerated and dangerous. The technology makes the means of repression far more pervasive and controlling. But the basic symptoms of a community internally conflicted to the point of collapse are there for anyone to observe.

Legalized executions are the graph of our decline. The more we resort to them, the more we admit that we are dying.

As a free society we are dying. As a cohesive community we are dying. As a people with confidence in our own future we are dying. With every lethal injection, we are announcing that we have lost control of our own destiny. And the more we ignore the root causes of our demise and become hypnotized by the hope for a miracle cure (the snake oil of firepower backed up by capital punishment) the more we only hasten and spread our social disease. Beneath the surface, the real justice concerns are racism, educational and economic inequality and

Steve Charleston, former bishop of Alaska, is chaplain at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn.

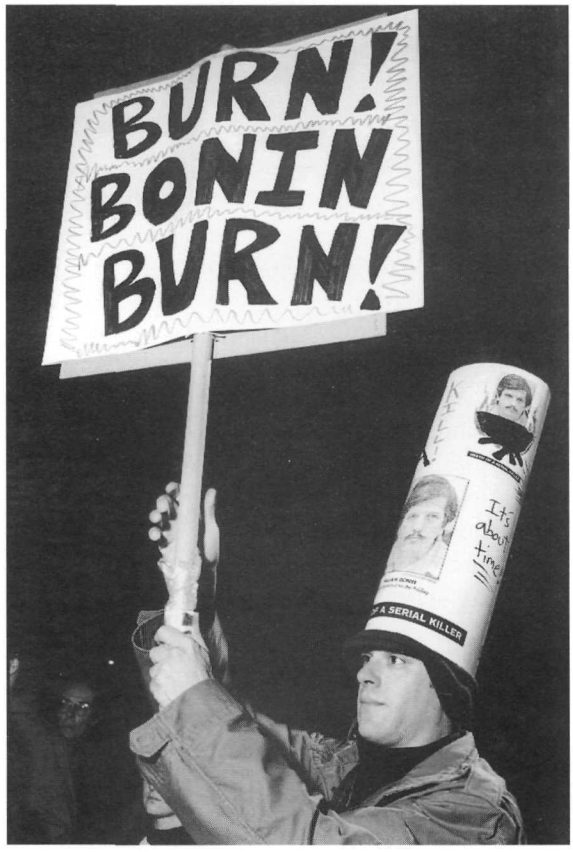
political institutions that no longer represent the people. Deal with those core issues and you deal with the problem. Ignore them and you fuel the problem. And no amount of firepower will change that basic equation.

I submit that if we want to get tough on crime, we should get tough on poverty. If we want to crack down on drugs, we should crack down on our own immorality. If we want to take back the streets, we should give back the hope.

For well over 200 years, the U.S. has thought of itself as the radical democratic alternative for humanity. Our claim has been that we are a just and free society without parallel in history. We have offered ourselves as a model for others to follow in aspiring to the ideals of true community. Now is a critical opportunity for us to live out those claims and become the alternative we say we are. A good first step would be to admit that mass executions (no matter how deserved by the criminals) are not a sign of strength but of weakness. The next step, which is far more difficult, would be to confront the currents of fear that are inexorably carrying us away from justice and toward repression. The final step would be to reshape our society to such a degree that every community within its boundaries has an equal investment in preventing crime and supporting justice.

If we are to take these steps as a free society, then by definition, we must take them together. Racism is the priority. As long as people of color continue to be marginalized and scapegoated, as long as the resulting gap between the rich and poor continues to increase, as along as drugs are used for the purposes of social control in our cities, then we will remain adrift. Racism populates death row. It aids and abets criminal behavior among all classes and cultures in America.

The desperation of the poor and the greed of the rich meet in the dark alleys of the soul where money matters more than humanity. We should not be surprised that a society which allows the wealthy to routinely subvert justice also creates a condition for the underclass to do the same.



Death penalty advocates celebrate just prior to California's execution of sex offender William George Bonin in 1996. Alain McLaughlin/Impact Visuals

Racism, as the persistent nightmare of the American dream, paints crime with the colors of the dreamer's own imagination. For much of middle America, crime is black. Or brown. Therefore, it is easy for our middle class to distance itself from whole segments of the population. The lie of racism convinces these increasingly fearful Americans that the very men and women they should be working with are the cause of the fear itself. Consequently, rather than working for cooperation, mutual respect and shared planning, Americans are convinced they must rely on policing and punishment, on limiting human rights and resorting to capital punishment in order to contain the imaginary enemy from within. The true ghettos in America are not in our cities, but in our minds. They are ghettos of fear. Of racism. And unless we wake up, end our social addiction to blame and racial hatred, I believe the prospects for us all will remain not only bleak, but life-threatening.

To put it bluntly: Resorting to the death penalty is an act of fear. We use it because we are desperate. We can pass the most draconian laws imaginable, outfit whole armies of police, incarcerate a third of our poor, and execute thousands and we will be even less secure than we are today. We will not just be killing criminals. We will be killing ourselves.

And yet, we can, if we have the will, faith, and resolve to do so, change our direction, turn against the tide, and become what we have always said we were: a free, equal, and just society for all persons. It is still possible. But to make such a sea change in our destiny will require nothing less than a social revolution. Or to be more exact: a spiritual revolution.

As a Christian, I offer no apologies for the bleakness of my analysis of our current debate over capital punishment. The situation beneath the surface of the death penalty is grim. But racism and fear are not the only currents that shape and guide our national existence. There are other waters, living waters, to which we can turn for both our sustenance and our salvation. I believe there is still time. I am not describing the kind of national religi-

osity that equates Christ with law and order, but rather with a genuine faithfulness that allows all persons of all religious traditions to unite in a common front for the sake of community. Religious faith, lived out in tolerance and compassion, can unite our people in a shared commitment to end racism, poverty, and abuse. Together, we have that moral authority. The question of capital punishment can become for us a catalyst.

We can turn public awareness away from scapegoats and gas chambers toward an honest appraisal of the hard work that must be accomplished if America is to become a truly free and inclusive community. The task will be difficult. The tide of fear is powerful. The undercurrents of racism are endemic throughout our national life. But we must not be fearful ourselves. We must not imagine racism to be more than the cowardly excuse that it is. Fear always falls before the light of truth, of hope and of love. Justice, real justice for every person in this nation, is our strength. Respect, cooperation, trust, and unity are the forces we can bring to bear against the loss of confidence that haunts our society.

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I believe the day will come when we recognize death row for what it is: an icon for our crimes against ourselves. Consequently, I believe in a spiritual revolution. Even in the face of a fear so strong as the one which numbs our nation, I am convinced of the ultimate victory of justice over repression. I know in my heart that God will not allow us to slip beneath the waves of racism that batter our hope and divide our people, but instead will rescue us with a word that calms every storm.

I stand confident in the light of Christ Jesus who saved a convicted criminal from death, and by so doing saved her accusers as well. It is to that almost unimaginable vision of community that I commit my life. Along with so many others who dare to believe in the fulfillment of this promise, I let go of vengeance for the sake of justice and fear for the sake of community. I place myself between the convict and the executioner because I know, but for the grace of God, I could be either one. TW

Who's on death row?

- Eighty-two percent of the murder victims in the cases resulting in executions since 1976 have been white, even though whites are victims in less than 50 percent of the murders committed in the U.S.
- In Maryland, 87 percent of those on death row are African Americans.
- In Kentucky, 100 percent of those on death row are there for the murder of a white victim, despite the fact that there have been 1,000 African Americans murdered in that state since 1976.
- In New Jersey, a recent death penalty study by the state's Supreme Court found "strong and consistent biases" against black defendants, taking into account cases with similar socio-economic backgrounds and similar aggravating and mitigating circumstances.
- Under the federal death penalty, which resumed in 1988 and was expanded in 1994, 78 percent of those slated for capital prosecution have been members of minorities.
- Of the 330 executions which took place between 1976 and mid-1996, 274 (or 83 percent) have occurred in the South. Texas alone has accounted for about a third of all executions in the country. Houston, whose population makes up about 16 percent of Texas' total population, is responsible for about a third of Texas' death row. Similarly, over half of Pennsylvania's death row comes from one city, Philadelphia, which contains only 14 percent of the state's population.
- Between 1976 and mid-1996, nine juvenile offenders were executed. Sixty-nine percent of juvenile offenders on death row are either African American or Hispanic. Only seven other countries in the world are known to have executed a juvenile offender in the last 10 years, and none has executed as many as the U.S.
- Twenty-seven defendants with mental retardation (defined as a mental age generally less than 12 years old) were executed in the U.S. between 1976 and mid-1996.
- More than 3,000 people remain on death row awaiting execution.
- Between 1973 and mid-1996, 59 death row inmates were released after evidence of their innocence emerged.

—from a report by Richard C. Dieter, Death Penalty Information Center, Washington, D.C.

Executing the scapegoat

by Gil Bailie

At daybreak on November 13, 1849, Charles Dickens was taking an early morning walk in London when he came upon a raucous and jubilant crowd. Pausing to investigate, he found that the crowd had gathered for a public hanging. A woman, one Mrs. Manning, was shortly to be hanged. The jeering crowd was in the process of making the woman the butt of its gibes and jokes. Later that day, Dickens wrote an open letter to the *Times of London*, saying he had seen an "inconceivably awful" sight, "the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd" that gathered to watch a public hanging. Dickens went on to say that as the sun rose it lit "thousands and thousands of upturned faces, so inexpressibly odious in their brutal mirth or callousness that a man had cause to feel ashamed of the shape he wore."

As for more recent forms of what so shocked Dickens, Janny Scott, the same *Los Angeles Times* reporter who wrote the story analyzing the phenomenon of mob violence in the Rodney King beating, wrote a subsequent article that could be a postcript to Dickens's letter of 1849. In it, she said:

"The scene outside Florida State Prison at the 1989 execution of serial killer Theodore Bundy was one of the wildest. Parents brought children, men brought wives. Hundreds of reporters camped out in a pasture. It was like a tailgate party, someone said. Or Mardi Gras."

Scott then asks precisely the right question. "Why are people fascinated?" she wonders. Answers to this question abound, but none seem to finally account for the fascination. Scott gets close to the underlying dynamic when she concludes a litany of possible explanations with a perceptive observation. The execution, she says, "is a brutal act," but it is one carried out "in the name of civilization." It would be difficult to think of a more succinct summation of the underlying anthropological dynamic at work: *a brutal act done in the name of civilization*, an expulsion or execution that results in social harmony. Clearly, after the shaky justifications based on deterrence or retribution have fallen away, this is the stubborn fact that remains: a brutal act is done in the name of civilization. If we humans become too morally troubled by the brutality to revel in the glories of the civilization made possible by it, we will simply have to reinvent culture. This is what Nietzsche saw through a glass darkly. This is what Paul sensed when he declared the old order to be a dying one (1 Cor. 7:31). This the central anthropological issue of our age.

When a culture's sacrificial rituals "work," they transfer the existing rivalrous antagonisms onto one figure against whom all can unite, an act that miraculously dissolves existing tensions and replaces them with a social bond.

Janny Scott's brief article comes especially close to the essential point when she quotes Louis West, a UCLA professor of psychiatry. "Society uses its occasional legal victim of the gas, the rope or the electric chair as a lightning rod to focus divine wrath upon a single offender," says West, "while at the same time magically insinuating the survivors into the good graces of the gods by the blood sacrifice." Curiously, and tellingly, the ancient language of blood sacrifice goes more directly to the heart of the issue than does the more conventional language of modern social science.

Etymology is often a good place to begin. The original meaning of certain words, like the originating events of a culture, tends to recede as the word adjusts to a conventional and respectable place in a culture's vernacular. This is especially true of those words that have the most potential for shedding light on culture-founding events. "Fascination" is just such a word. The root of "fascination" is the Latin verb *fascinare*, which means to bind or hold spell-bound. It is related to the Latin *fascis*, which means a bundle bound together. The symbol of authority in ancient Rome was a *fasces*, a bundle of rods bound together around an ax with the ax blade projecting from it. From these roots, the modern term "fascist" is derived. What are we to make of this? It suggests that when the journalist Janny Scott and the UCLA psychiatrist she interviewed puzzle over why humans find public executions fascinating, they are touching on an anthropological issue of the first order. The complex etymological background of the word "fascination" suggests an underlying link between fascination, the *esprit de corps* of a violent mob, and the structures of cultural authority that institutionalize the *esprit de corps*

Gil Bailie is a teacher, lecturer and writer who has focused his work on the spiritual and anthropological implications of Western literature. This piece is excerpted from his book *Violence Unveiled* (©1995 by Gil Bailie) and is used with permission of The Crossroad Publishing Co., 370 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017; 1-800-395-0690. Paperback $17.95 + $3.95 shipping.

and extend its social benefits over time. Were we to fully understand the complex phenomenon of fascination, we would know more than we generally care to know about the origin and nature of conventional culture.

When a culture or subculture turns the system for protecting law-abiding citizens into a social ritual for generating its camaraderie, it sets up a social pattern structurally similar to the crucifixion. Eventually, in such situations, the objective wickedness of the culprit will not be enough to offset the moral misgivings aroused by that similarity. For obvious reasons, this is especially so in the case of "public executions." This is no doubt why of the very few Western societies that still impose the death penalty, in none of them are the executions carried out "in public." The experience of being morally shaken by a public execution is the beginning of an anthropological and spiritual revolution for which the term "Christianity" was coined decades after the public execution of Jesus. Jesus' moral rectitude surely contributed to the shock felt by his followers. And yet the recognition of the victim's moral rectitude alone could not have set in motion the anthropological revolution from which the world is now reeling. This revolution was set in motion by the revelation of Christ's structural innocence, by which I mean that his "innocence" was deducible from the fact that all accused him and no one rebutted the accusation. He was *perfectly* innocent, not just because he was ethically beyond reproach, but because he stood *perfectly* alone before a *perfectly* unanimous mob. What Christ has in common with all those against whom a unanimous mob has risen up will eventually outweigh the moral differences, however vast, that separate them. Societies under biblical influence will little longer be able to nullify the empathy for scapegoats aroused by the Cross by reserving their righteous and socially galvanizing contempt for certified moral failures.

What Christ has in common with all those against whom a unanimous mob has risen up will eventually outweigh the moral differences, however vast, that separate them.

At roughly the same time Dickens's indignant letter was being published in the *Times*, Coventry Patmore was writing a poem entitled "A London Fete." Like the last scene and epilogue of William Golding's novel, Patmore's poem represents a marvelously insightful reflection on the demise of the sacrificial system in the western world. It deals with a public hanging in London, around which a great crowd gathers. It anticipates the disintegration of Western culture's most explicitly sacrificial institution, but it does so in marvelously subtle and insightful ways. With a keen eye for the true purpose of the execution, Patmore's poem explores the ritual's diminishing capacity for restoring social order and harmony. At first, however, there are indications that such a harmonious outcome might still be possible.

...They brought the man out to be hanged.
Then came from all the people there
A single cry, that shook the air;
Mothers held up their babies to see,
Who spread their hands, and crowed for glee;
Here a girl from her vesture tore
A rag to wave with, and joined the roar...

That *single cry* is precisely what such rituals are all about. It is the verbal equivalent of the stones rained on the victim by a maddened mob. This single cry, achieved without anyone consciously acting to produce it, seems almost miraculous and is essential to the mob's *conviction*, its sense of having found the real *convict*. In terms of its primitive origins, it is probably not coincidental that this cry occurs at the moment when the victim would most likely be screaming protestations. Drowning out the victim's protests — effectively silencing the victim's voice — would be another function of the unanimous cry.

Removing criminals from society and deterring would-be felons from emulating them is a necessary task for any society that wishes to remain civil. As Patmore's poem underscores, however, these legitimate concerns can sometimes serve as a rational justification for an essentially irrational sacrificial ritual. This is especially so, of course, in the case of public execution or "capital punishment." Patmore makes it clear that the issue of guilt is extraneous to the social ritual he is examining in his poem.

...There's a man, with yelling tired,
Stopped, and the culprit's crime
inquired...

By the time of the ritual expulsion or elimination, the victim's culpability — or at any rate the rightness of the punishment — must be so completely clear that "it goes without saying." In myth, of course, what "goes without saying" is the righteousness of the mob. When the condemned one's culpability "goes without saying," it suggests that what is happening is a social or religious ritual more than a criminal proceeding.

It is hardly an idle question to ask: What happens when a culture continues to attempt the periodic restoration of its social harmonies by relying on myths and rituals of sacred violence that have lost their religious authority and moral immunity? The Patmore poem is ready with an answer, and it is as clear an answer to that question as we have a right to expect. In the poem, the hush at the climactic moment is shattered by a roar, a roar "less

loud" but nevertheless one that is *more confused and affrighting than before.* The last lines of the poem proceed then to present a sweeping and haunting image of a sacrificial scapegoating ritual that has failed to achieve its social purpose. Its violence begins very slowly to rebound on the society that sponsored it.

The dangling corpse hung straight and still.
The show complete, the pleasure past,
The solid masses loosened fast:
The thief slunk off, with ample spoil,
To ply elsewhere his daily toil;
A baby strung its doll to a stick;
Two children caught and hanged a cat;
Two friends walked on, in lively chat;
And two, who had disputed places,
Went forth to fight, with murderous faces.

What makes Patmore's poem so helpful is that he shows us what happens when a society continues to resort to such rituals after they have begun to malfunction, and *that* is the real issue before us. In ancient Greece, the victim of sacrificial, scapegoat violence was called the *pharmakos.* The Greek word *pharmakon,* from which we get "pharmacy" and its cognates, means both "medicine" and "poison." Sacrificial rituals that cure the social realm of its tensions under certain circumstances, can poison it under other circumstances. More to the point, if a sacrificial event fails to function as a cure, it will inevitably function as a poison, which is what is happening in our day.

When a culture's sacrificial rituals "work," they transfer the existing rivalrous antagonisms onto one figure against whom all can unite, an act that miraculously dissolves existing tensions and replaces them with a social bond. Conversely, when a culture's sacrificial routines fail to generate this combination of camaraderie and moral rectitude, the existing rivalries fester and the social fabric begins to fray. TW

Anti-death penalty protesters create a cemetery bearing the names of the 502 people executed in California between 1893 and 1967. Alain McLaughlin/Impact Visuals

Organizing against the death penalty

The following organizations provide resources and support for people working to oppose the death penalty:

1. National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, 918 F Street NW - #601, Wash., D.C. 20004; 202-347-2411, fax 202-347-2510.

The NCADP works to bring an end to the death penalty through organizing, education and legislation. Contact them to become an individual member or to learn what affiliate groups are working at the state level or locally where you are.

2. Murder Victim Families for Reconciliation, P.O. Box 54, Atlantic, VA 23303-0054; 804-824-0948. MVFR is an organization of family members of victims; it supports alternatives to the death penalty and healing and reconciliation for families. MVFR also offers speakers to interested groups.

3. Death Row Support Project, P.O. Box 600, Liberty Mills, IN 46946; 219-982-7480. The Project facilitates supportive correspondence between persons on death row and persons on the outside.

4. American Friends Service Committee, Criminal Justice Program, 1501 Cherry St., Phila., PA 19102; 215-241-7130; pclark@afsc.org.

The AFSC Criminal Justice Program is sponsoring the Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty project. A national gathering is planned Nov. 14-16 in Wash., D.C. Project organizers will also provide resources, networking help and education activities for study groups nationwide. For more information on the national conference or forming a study group, contact Pat Clark at the above address.

Alternatives to the death penalty

by Ruth Morris

I cannot answer the question "What is the practical alternative to capital punishment?" because I share with most of the world's peoples the conviction that capital punishment doesn't do a thing for anyone except add to the sum of misery in the world. It is reserved for the powerless, has little to do with the seriousness of offenses or danger, and in the nature of our elitist system never will. It has never been shown to have a deterrent effect, even if the concept of deterrence were not so morally abhorrent.

I used to call the present dominant eurocentric North American justice system retributive justice, but I have since hit on a better name: misery justice. It is *misery justice* because it never looks at making anyone better, just tries to ensure that offenders and their families are as miserable as the most miserable victim of crime. In the process, it generally revictimizes victims and adds to social misery in many ways. Misery justice is also popular in considering poverty: Don't do anything to make the lot of the working poor more endurable, just make sure the best-supported disabled person or child or aged person on welfare is more miserable than the worst paid, most exploited person in the workforce.

Jesus preached a transformative gospel. He looked inequities in the face, and called them for what they were. The best models of justice that follow that original Christian tradition derive mostly from indigenous people. Native Studies professor Sakej Henderson noted that the two icons of eurocentric thought, Jesus and Socrates, were both executed by the finest justice systems of their day.

"There is no word for justice in our native languages," says law professor Trish Monture-Okanee. "The nearest word is harmony."

There are four systems currently in practice in many parts of the world that are far more effective for all concerned than misery justice.

Native healing circles

Judge Bria Hucaluk of northern Saskatchewan approached native communities and invited their participation; by now virtually every community in her area has one. They are voluntary for victim and offender, but as with all healing justice approaches, so much more satisfying that most choose them. Native healing circles are the only legal proceedings I know of that start out with a prayer.

After introductions, the offender is invited to speak, and then everyone in the circle, without pressure. The goal is consensus. After 3-4 hours, healing begins to happen. Huculak observes: "It's a very emotional and painful experience. It's one thing to appear before a white judge who flies in and out. That's not the same as facing the victim, your own family and your own community. That's why it's more effective." The participation of respected elders adds a special quality to native healing circles. The solid support of the community for victims is the best guarantee of healing and safety for them.

Victim-offender reconciliation

For over 25 years, victim-offender reconciliation has been spreading all over North America and Europe, from a modest Mennonite beginning in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario. Based on the idea that we need to focus on *giving the crime back to the primary parties, the victim and the offender*, VORP tries to meet the core needs of victims for answers, recognition of their wrongs, safety, restitution and meaning. By bringing victim and offender together with trained mediators, they enable a three-step process to happen:

1) Facts are cleared up, providing victims desperately sought answers to reassert their sense of control over their lifespace.

2) Feelings are released, just where they belong, to those who caused the wrong, in a safe, trustworthy setting.

3) Resolutions are identified. The victims say what they want to happen, and the victim, offender, and mediator work on finding a realistic outcome that satisfies all. How different from our courts, which have a separate agenda of their own, bearing little relation to the needs of either primary party!

A major European conference about six years ago reported on VORP programs all over Europe and North America. The general findings were:

1) Victims were 90 percent satisfied with VORP, less than 40 percent with traditional court processes. Offenders said VORP was harder, but fairer.

2) Restitution agreements were more than twice as likely to be kept from VORP sessions as from court orders. Not surprising, since the VORP session enabled the restitution to be realistic, and engaged the offender in understanding the harm, and helping to develop the solution.

Two North American models deal mainly with the hardest cases: family survivors of a homicide and survivors of

Ruth Morris is a long-time Quaker activist with academic and administrative experience. She works with Rittenhouse, a Toronto-based organization offering education for transformative justice. Artist Diana Bryer lives in New Mexico

violent rapists. Genesee County, New York, has had an amazing VORP program for over 30 years. Genesee County brings victims and offenders together within hours of the crime. Victim assistance is intense, right down to cleanup at the crime scene. Victims are supported, included and recognized in every way. Prosecutors and victims are part of a team that works for a sentencing package that makes sense to all.

In British Columbia, Mennonite Dave Gustafson works with long-term sentenced violent offenders and their victims. Typically he asks victims, "Are there any questions, the answers to which are essential to your healing, which you would like to ask the person who did this to you, if you could feel completely safe?" Resoundingly, years later, virtually every victim says yes. Gustafson begins a process of shuttle diplomacy, videotaping the victims asking their questions, when they feel thoroughly ready. After a similar process he videotapes the offenders answering them.

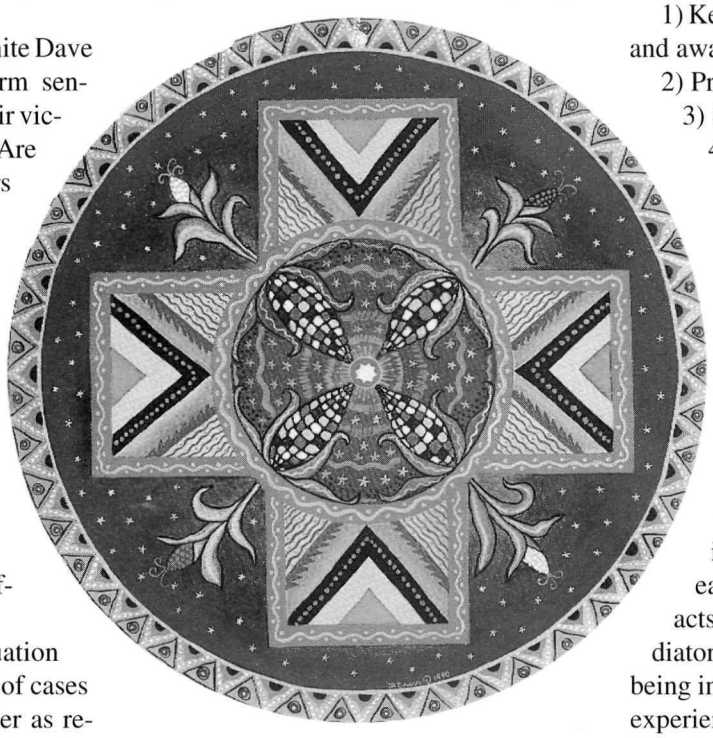
The overall program evaluation shows that even in the minority of cases when victims found the offender as repulsive as they had originally thought, they found healing through the program, because it equalized the playing field and demystified the power the offender had over their lives.

Japanese restitution model

John Haley, a criminologist who has spent six years in Japan studying the Japanese correctional system, gives astounding statistics on its success:

Between 1949 and 1988, while crime rates were rising all over the world, the number of penal code offenses fell by 30 percent in Japan. In that same period, Japanese homicides fell by 40 percent, robberies fell 60 percent and rapes 80 percent.

Homogeneity alone cannot account for this — Sweden is a homogeneous society with many advantages over Japan, yet their rate rose with that of the rest of the world. It is the Japanese response system that appears to cause this unique result. The Japanese system stresses offenders taking responsibility, correcting the harm, expressing contrition and paying restitution. Immediate family supports offenders through these steps, including treatment for the offender, if required. Conviction rates are 99 percent, over 80 percent of those arrested confess, and fewer than five percent of those convicted go to prison. The formal authorities respect the informal community controls, and support them.



Corn Mandala Diana Bryer

Haley concludes: "Japan has discovered how to merge communitarian values with the modern legal system." It is no accident that the Japanese language, like other indigenous ones, lacks a word for justice, but defines moral conduct in religious terms such as harmony or healing.

Family group conferences

Family Group Conferences are an innovation in New Zealand, with Maori roots, and therefore bear resemblance to Native Healing Circles. By 1989 New Zealand found that neither the treatment model nor the punitive model of response to juvenile offenders was working. The landmark 1989 legislation had six goals:

1) Keeping young people out of courts and away from labels;
2) Promoting accountability;
3) Strengthening family life;
4) Including victims in the process;
5) Making decisions by consensus;
6) Respecting cultural differences.

Since that legislation, 80-90 percent of young offenders are dealt with in the new way. Within three weeks of an offense, a Family Group Conference is convened that includes victims, offenders, and the family and affected community of each. A Youth Justice Coordinator acts as facilitator, convener and mediator. Victims are re-empowered by being included and invited to share their experience, their pain and their anger. Usually a silence follows while all eyes turn to the young offender. This is the miracle: that FGCs *condemn the sin but not the sinner.* Almost all young offenders express shame, and usually offer some kind of apology.

In a full FGC, the families of both victim and offender participate, showing the young offender how widely his or her action has damaged their own community as well as that of the victim. When all this anguish is being exposed, one party generally comes to the defence of the young offender: the victim! Words like: "Well, what Joe did was very wrong, but he doesn't seem to be such a bad kid. We

just need to help him straighten out."

Thus, the FGC often performs a miracle: a healing process that may never be completed by our revictimizing courts is accelerated, so that the victim is enabled to choose voluntarily to forgive. From having been the most powerless person, the victim becomes the most powerful person, the only one that can free the community from this burden.

As the process continues, the whole group becomes involved in solutions. Many victims, who begin the process wanting answers, restitution and a chance to vent anger, get very excited about trying to help young offenders. Marie Sullivan, who is in charge of this process in Auckland, says, "Constantly in my work ... I am affirmed in my belief in the innate goodness of people by the common sense, the compassion and the cooperation of victims."

Australia has its own version of Family Group Conferencing, led by an amazing veteran policeman, Terry O'Connell. The Australian System makes the police the primary mediators and facilitators. I have seen O'Connell inspire a roomful of police with the hope that their original vision of helping the community can at last find practical expression.

New Zealand had a wonderful chance to see this process in operation in 1994, when two Tongan 5-year-olds were mowed down by a speeding car which didn't even stop. A picture of their grieving parents, who always picked them up but missed being there by a five-minute-early class dismissal, fueled anger and outrage throughout New Zealand.

Then the Monday news reported that the young driver had fled to his sister's house and turned himself in from there. Elders in their Samoan community had taken charge of the matter. The report continued: "The families of two South Auckland boys killed by a car welcomed the accused driver yesterday with open arms and forgiveness. .. He was ceremonially reunited with both communities at a special church service last night. ..The young man sat at the feast table, flanked by the mothers of the dead boys."

Activist priest and author Jim Consedine observed that "both Tongan and Samoan communities have a tradition of restorative justice. The well-being of the community and its restoration to peace and harmony are the primary values sought in the justice process. So restoring the young man to his family and the bonds between the two communities were the primary objects. The offer of a sincere apology and its acceptance through forgiveness and mercy flow from such a tradition. Secondly, the deeply held Christian beliefs of both communities meant they recognized each other as belonging to the one family of God, that even national boundaries and culpable action should not place at risk."

This amazing story is not at all as unique as our popular media would have us believe. At conferences on these topics I meet victim after victim who has found healing in reaching out for peace through meetings with their offenders.

A New England mother I met two years ago bought a gun to kill the man who shot her son to death when he emerged from prison. Eight years of vengeance-seeking left her so destroyed she turned to reconciliation for her own peace, fought the whole system to meet with her son's murderer, and is now tutoring him in lifeskills.

A murderer in a Canadian prison attributes his changed life to his victim's mother. "Every time I was beginning to give up or screw up, she would say to me, 'You HAVE to make something of your life, or my son's death will have been for nothing!'"

Canada's aboriginal people call the Justice Ministers, "keepers of all the bad experiences."

"There is no word for justice in our native languages," law professor Trish Monture-Okanee said at a 1995 justice conference in Saskatchewan. "The nearest word is harmony."

Another indigenous speaker, Professor Sakej Youngblood Henderson, developed the theme further: "For five centuries, eurocentric theory has used violence and terrorism as the foundation of social order, and called it justice. We must heal ourselves from 500 years of oppression. We must return to our old healing systems." TW

Corporate crime

You are 30 times as likely to die from corporate violence as from private homicide. Corporate killing comes in four packages:

1) Making, promoting and selling products known to cause injury, disease and death in consumers, such as the Dalkon Shield, Ford Pinto, Chevrolet Corvair and Nestle baby formula.

2) Workplace accidents, a high proportion of which are preventable.

3) Workplace health conditions, such as asbestos, mining air, and a wide variety of carcinogens, many of them affecting surrounding communities.

4) Environmental damage such as mercury pollution, which causes permanent damage and death to whole communities, not to mention risk of our entire future in this world.

I am not in favor of a revenge approach to these truly dangerous and unrepentant killers. But I *am* in favor of quitting the pretense that the pitiful and sometimes reprehensible human beings who fill the death rows of the U.S. are the greatest threat to the whole future of our civilization. — *R.M.*

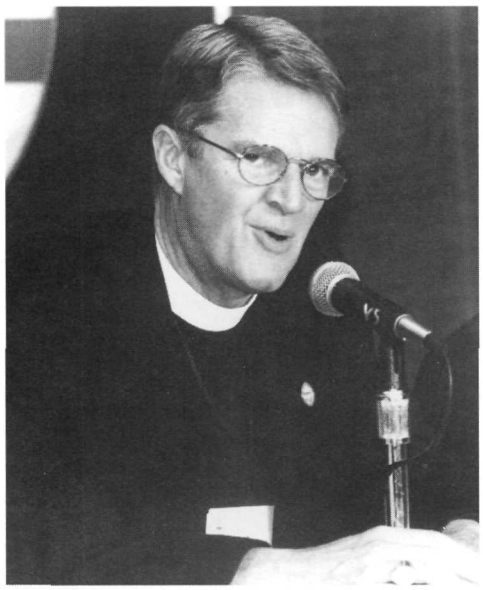
The church's new presiding bishop: Frank Griswold

by Jacqueline Schmitt

Guiding the church along the journey from conversation to conversion describes Frank Tracy Griswold's understanding of the essential ministry of bishop. "We are designed to discover truth together through conversation," he said soon after his election.

Griswold was elected in 1985 as co-adjutor of a diocese ready to move forward on the ordination and deployment of women and toward more openness regarding homosexuality. He has described some of this process as "excruciating," but as a relative newcomer to the diocese, I found it refreshing, progressive and catholic in the sense of being open to a wide diversity of people and concerns. "The jewel in the biretta belt," some used to call Chicago, with its past reputation for high Anglo-Catholicism and an all-male priesthood. Perhaps wrenching for some raised under that old synthesis, but for all his willingness to listen to objections to women and openly gay clergy, Griswold has held his ground. During all these conversations, women and openly lesbian and gay clergy and laypersons are present, active and in positions of leadership in the diocese.

"Conversation and conversion come from the same root word meaning to turn or to be turned," Griswold said in his sermon at General Convention. Such conversation can be a welcome relief to some but others find his ambiguity frustrating. A clergy day on homosexuality held a few years ago may illustrate that. Four clergymen spoke, two "for" and two "against" ordination of openly gay clergy. Not all diocesan clergy attended, and perhaps no one's deeply held conviction was changed, for the tone of the day was friendly and conversant. But for Griswold, these "converting conversations" happen among equals. Those expanding the expectations of the church are as much on the inside of the church as are those who argue the traditions they hold should never change.



Frank Tracy Griswold at final General Convention press conference ENS/Jim Solheim

To hold so articulate a vision of the church catholic raises our expectations of Frank Griswold as a bishop who can apply that vision in society. He has been less active in the public sphere than other religious leaders in Chicago, although his spiritual journey draws him into the heart of Christ, with its deep compassion for the heart of the world. We who believe the church should confront the powers and principalities should urge Griswold to keep listening to the cries of those excluded by racism and social and economic forces and not only those excluded by the actions of the church.

Stewardship is a concern many have raised about the Diocese of Chicago, whose giving to the national church plummeted two years ago. Responding to anger and dissatisfaction with diocesan structures, Griswold led the parishes in a five-year experiment with purely voluntary giving. What it has taught him is how much effort goes into telling the people of the church about the work of the church, and how involved the bishop must be in that task of persuasive "selling."

The task of persuading the whole of the Episcopal Church to support its work is before Frank Griswold now. The actions of General Convention lead me to think he is inheriting a church far less divided than the one Bishop Browning greeted 12 years ago. His vision of embracing catholicity may fit this church as we come to real consensus — an apparantly liberal consensus — on ordination and liturgy. The challenge before us all is to take that progessive, catholic vision into the world that desperately needs to hear the liberating word of the Gospel and feel the embracing touch of Christ.

We who believe the church should confront the powers and principalities should urge Griswold to keep listening to the cries of those excluded by racism and social and economic forces and not only those excluded by the actions of the church.

Jacqueline Schmitt is the Episcopal chaplain at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and editor of *Plumbline*, a publication that addresses issues of ministry in higher education.

Vital Signs

A vote (finally) taking a clear stand on women's ordination

by Katie Sherrod

Three years ago, at the General Convention in Indianapolis, the Episcopal Synod of America (ESA) demanded that the Episcopal Church take a clear stand on whether the canon on ordination was mandatory or permissive.

The church waffled — setting up three more years of dialogue on "implementing" Canon III.8.1. But in Philadelphia, the ESA finally got what it asked for. It just didn't get what it wanted.

By decisive votes in both houses, General Convention made it clear Canon III.8.1 is mandatory, and that all dioceses must find ways to ordain women to the priesthood and for female priests to exercise their ministry. The four non-complying dioceses have three "more" years to figure out a way to do this.

The four non-complying bishops reacted in ways reflective of their leadership styles. William Wantland of Eau Claire said — yet once again — that he would retire. John David Scholfield said he would do what is necessary. Keith Ackerman of Quincy got teary. Jack Iker started uttering threats and promising defiance.

The vote was the culmination of years of work by members of the Episcopal Women's Caucus and by countless lay people in the Dioceses of Eau Claire, Quincy, San Joaquin and Fort Worth who support, want, feel in need of the ministry of female priests. More importantly, it was a recognition that the ministries of ordained women are worth valuing, and that all dioceses should have the chance to experience the grace they offer.

It became clear early on that most people had had enough of stalling on this issue. The Convention's legislative committee on ministry heard the testimony of more than 50 people. Each witness was given three minutes to state her or his position. Iker, however, was given more than a half hour to explain the so-called Dallas-Fort Worth plan he and James Stanton, bishop of the neighboring Diocese of Dallas, have devised.

Under this "plan," a female priest licensed in the Diocese of Dallas would be allowed to function in Fort Worth. A parish who insisted on "going against [Iker's] wishes" and calling a female priest also would be placed under Stanton's authority. That parish's money would remain in Fort Worth, however. The female priest would be barred from Fort Worth's diocesan convention.

"Conscience is mine to pay the price for, but I do not believe that someone else should impose their conscience on others and make them pay the price."
— Lucinda Laird of Newark

Iker said this plan had been accepted by the rectors of Fort Worth parishes who support the ordination of women. His account of that pre-General Convention meeting is at odds, however, with that of several priests who were there. They say they were given to understand that it was this, or nothing. Given that choice, they accepted it.

But, they said, Iker made it clear that any rector who hired a female priest, and any parish who called a female priest would be in deep trouble with their bishop. Said one priest who was present at the meeting: "It was here's a plan, but don't you dare take advantage of it."

And indeed, Iker said in Philadelphia that if a parish insisted on having a female priest, "I would consider it a breakdown of the pastoral relationship."

A subcommittee of the committee on ministry, at the urging of members Keith Ackerman, the ESA bishop of Quincy, and Judy Mayo, a lay deputy from Fort Worth, made an attempt to offer immunity from presentments for clergy opposed to women's ordination who serve in dioceses attempting to implement the church laws. Catherine Roskam, Bishop of Suffragan of New York, however, reminded the committee why concerns about presentments were in the air — because of the presentment brought by these very same bishops against Walter Righter, the retired bishop of Iowa. The proposed amendment was soundly defeated.

Then the resolutions moved on to the House of Deputies, where, in a vote by orders, lay deputies approved the resolution enforcing the ordination canons (A052) with 69 yes votes, 30 no votes, and 13 deputations divided. Clergy deputations voted with 70 yes votes, 32 no votes and 11 divided. Divided votes are cast as no votes. A simple majority of 57 affirmative votes was needed for passage.

A second resolution protecting the rights of those hold differing viewpoints on women's ordination (A053) was approved with 71 lay deputations voting yes, 24 no and 16 divided. Clergy deputations voted 71 yes, 28 no, and 12 divided.

The word "mandatory" was a stumbling block for some deputies. The American Anglican Council had recruited several ordained women to sign an "Open Letter" in which they opposed A052 and A052, and attempted to shame those women pushing for passage by accusing them of the "sin of impatience."

Edward Little of the Diocese of San Joaquin (California), a clergy member of the ministry committee, also urged "patience": "I believe in conversion. In 1976 I opposed the ordination of women.

Katie Sherrod, who lives in the Diocese of Fort Worth, is vice president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus.

'The Faith of our Fathers is being taken from us'

The Episcopal Synod of America (ESA) held its ninth annual legislative meeting at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Rosemont, Penn., immediately following the Episcopal Church's General Convention last July. In reviewing the actions of the convention ESA president Donald P. Moriarty, II, lamented that "the spiritual environment within the Episcopal Church continues to be poisoned by false teaching, and continues to degrade." Among the convention's offending actions he cited passage of legislation (1) requiring that women be given access to ordination, (2) providing medical insurance for "domestic partners" that include partners of the same sex, (3) directing the standing commission on Liturgy and Music to study liturgies for the blessing of same-sex commitments and (4) approving full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America despite a provision that would allow for this church to accept the ordained leadership of Lutheran clergy not in the apostolic succession.

"The election of Bishop Frank Griswold as Presiding Bishop is basis for major concern for the future," Moriarty also claimed. Griswold "deliberately rejected biblical authority," the ESA president noted, when at the 1994 General Convention in Indianapolis he signed a statement of *"Koinonia"* affirming that gay and lesbian Christians' committed relationships can be on a par with the marriages of heterosexual Christians. In addition, "[Griswold] has knowingly ordained practicing homosexuals and has helped design and has commended forms of worship whose content clearly deviates from historic liturgies and the statements of the creeds." Although "[Griswold] is a highly personable and likable individual," Moriarty said, "his theological center is certainly not the historic center of the Christian faith."

With this General Convention, the ESA leader complained, "the body of doctrine of this Church is now in the process of being changed and no longer will it mean the same thing to be a member of the Episcopal Church." Regretfully, he said, "The Faith of our Fathers is being taken away from us," a fact which the group has documented in "a rather expensive, but very worthwhile video project" which documents the Philadelpia General Convention. "No longer will individuals be able to deny their statements and actions," Moriarty said. "We have their faces and their words on video tape for all the world to see."

Searching for how "to make possible our continued health and safety as a spiritual community within this poisoned and oppressive spiritual environment," the ESA has concluded that it has no option but to establish itself as a new orthodox province of the Anglican Communion in North America, although the open letter issued at the close of the Rosemont assembly said "we are not leaving anything or going anywhere." Calling on "all orthodox Episcopalians and orthodox associations and ministries to join us in this task of renewal, revival and rebuilding," the group has outlined a plan by which the dioceses led by the four ESA bishops who refuse to ordain women priests — Eau Claire, Fort Worth, Quincy and San Joaquin — will form the core of the new province. Parishes outside these dioceses who want to part of the new province are invited to ask the ESA bishops or bishops who are part of the Dallas-based conservative coalition called the American Anglican Council for "episcopal oversight." Individuals who can't find a nearby "orthodox parish home," are encouraged to build their own with the help of the North American Missionary society run by Jon Shuler.

— Julie A. Wortman

In time I came to believe that God is calling women and men to the priesthood and episcopate. My heart was changed because the Holy Spirit had time and space to transform me."

But in the committee hearings, Little had made it clear that his "conversion" happened because he had had an opportunity to experience the ministry of female priests. People in the four non-complying dioceses are not allowed that opportunity. One cannot "receive" what one is not allowed to experience.

Anne Robbins of Southern Ohio, a clergy member of the Committee on Dialogue on the Implementation of Canon III.8.1 and a member of the ministry committee, responded, "It is time to give our pain to God for good. ... I believe that God is asking us to help push away the stone from the tomb in which women's ministries have been buried. God is asking us to move on, to state definitively that the ministries of women who are priests are welcomed and needed throughout the church."

The so-called "conscience clause" was brought up more than once as the resolutions were debated, with Lucinda Laird, a clergy deputy from Newark, pointing out that, "Conscience is mine to pay the price for, but I do not believe that someone else should impose their conscience on others and make them pay the price."

Then came the vigil in the House of Bishops.

After the four non-complying bishops were allowed to address the house, Dorsey Henderson of Upper South Carolina offered an amendment that would have prevented the provisions of resolution A052 from going into effect until new bishops are elected in the four dioceses.

Vermont's Mary Adelia McLeod pointed out that in the case of Iker and Ackerman, both in their 40s, Henderson's amendment could mean an "unconscionable" wait of 20 years or more for women to exercise their priestly ministry in those dioceses.

Sanford Hampton, assisting bishop in the Diocese of Olympia (Washington),

opposed Henderson's amendment, saying, "The diocese is not to be identified with the individual who happens to the hold the office of bishop."

The amendment was defeated in a roll-call vote, 138 to 51.

Then John MacNaughton, retired bishop of the Diocese of West Texas, offered an amendment that would have barred presentments being brought against any clergy whose dioceses have alternative ordination processes for women. That amendment was defeated in a voice vote.

Then came the roll call vote on A052. It passed overwhelmingly, as did A053.

Given their eagerness to take Righter to court, it is no wonder the four bishops opposed to ordaining women were not comforted by assurances that no presentments would be attempted against bishops seeking to comply with the new provisions. Their unwillingness to trust the good faith of their brother and sister bishops was revealing.

In a press conference following the vote, Iker said he would engage in "active resistance." He has since announced that his "plan" is as far as he is willing to go.

However, given that Fort Worth is named by the ESA as one of the four pillar dioceses of their proposed illegal province, it appears that he and the other three bishops are willing to go much farther.

Telling the story

"Stand in the Temple" is a new video available from the Episcopal Women's Caucus that tells the story of the battle for women's ordination in the Episcopal Church in the words of the women who participated in the struggle. Filmed at the Caucus' 25th Anniversary celebration in Alexandria, Va., and produced by Katie Sherrod, this moving account is a must-see for anyone interested in this compelling chapter of women's church history. Copies are available for $29.95 plus $3 for postage from Carlin Rankin, 25420 44th Street, Washington, D.C. 20007-1105. Make checks payable to "EWC."

Title IV disciplinary canons amended

by Gay Jennings

When I was appointed to the General Convention legislative committee on canons in 1991, I wondered for what sin(s) I was doing penance. Canons? Church laws? Rules and regulations? What a waste of my time. How boring! I could not have been more wrong.

I have come to a new appreciation for the place of canons in the life of a community of faith. Every community has rules to govern their common life. Canons are not the Gospel, but they can and do reflect Gospel values — truth, accountability and justice, mercy and restoration, and equity. The formulation, interpretation, and implementation of canons is justice work.

Title IV has been described as a work in progress. Significant progress was made in Philadelphia. The 1994 General Convention approved the first major overhaul of the disciplinary canons in decades. The discipline of deacons and priests was the primary focus in 1994 with the sections pertaining to bishops the primary focus this time around.

After 27 hours of hearings and committee meetings, much of which pertained to the discipline of bishops, someone quipped, "Why are we spending so much time discussing something that has never happened?"

The proposed revisions to Title IV sailed through the House of Deputies with only minor amendments. To the credit of the House of Bishops, they, too, overwhelmingly adopted the revisions along with a few amendments that strengthened the 56-page document.

There were minimal attempts to prevent a single complainant or alleged victim from being able to file a charge against a bishop, and to shorten the time allotted for the "window" which permits charges for offenses that were previously barred by the statute of limitations. The bishops, who promised in their ordination vows "to defend those who have no helper," did not assent to these changes.

Major changes to the disciplinary canons as applied to bishops include a provision giving the Presiding Bishop the ability to issue a Temporary Inhibition which includes consent of the Standing Committee if the bishop exercises jurisdiction; the creation of a Review Committee composed of all orders to function like a Standing Committee in the investigation of alleged misconduct; expansion of those able to bring a charge against a bishop; a different process for an alleged doctrinal offense with a charge brought to the House of Bishops, and a statemnt of disassociation voted upon before a presentment may be considered; and a first reading of a constitutional change to include clergy and laity on trial courts for bishops.

Other general changes include defining aTemporary Inhibition as as an extraordinary remedy to be used sparingly and limited to situations where immediate or irreparable harm might be done to individuals or the good order of the Church; provision for "Consultants" to assist those accused of an Offense in fully understanding the content and mechanicsTitle IV at the beginning of a disciplinary process; replacement of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure used by ecclesiastical courts with Rules of Procedure designed specifically for proceedings under Title IV; and a provision for conciliation of disciplinary matters (voluntary mediation) not involving immorality or serious personal misconduct.

— Gay Jennings is a deputy from the Diocese of Ohio.

Same-sex blessings still on agenda

by Jane Garrett

At the best attended hearing at General Convention, approximately 50 persons testified, alternating very moving pro and con sentiments, on the subject of same-sex blessing rites. The next morning the remaining witnesses continued the testimony. When brought before the full House of Deputies, the resolution passed by several diocesan conventions calling for the preparation of a rite for inclusion in The Book of Occasional Services, failed on a vote by orders — but only by one diocese in each order. The closeness of the vote seemed to surprise proponents and opponents alike.

On the penultimate day of Convention, the Diocese of Missouri's version of the blessing resolution (preparation of a rite for study only) came before the bishops. Joe Doss of New Jersey, introduced a strengthened substitute resolution with a built-in timetable for continued theological study by the Standing Liturgical Commission (now combined with Music) followed by a report to be available, with recommended future steps, by November 1999, for consideration by the 73rd General Convention. The bishops passed it and the next morning, without a vote by orders, so did the Deputies. When asked at the conclusion of the bishops' debate if this action would mean a moratorium on blessings at least until the Denver Convention in 2000, Doss replied, "No."

In related actions, survivor benefits from the Pension Fund for same-sex spouses failed to pass.Many Deputies said they were unwilling to vote for this until the church settles the same-sex blessing issue.

— Jane Garrett is a clergy deputy from the Diocese of Vermont.

Browning: naming hate

Let us focus for a moment on our struggles around sexuality. And what could be closer to us than something that is central to each of us, at the very root of our being. We actually do agree on most issues around sexuality. We agree on the sanctity of marriage. We agree that explitative relationships and abusive relationships are evil. We have a message for our culture about this. We should be delivering it with unity and strength. Instead, we have been diverted by fear, and, let me name it, by hate.

And I have wondered if this diversion does not come from the evil from which we pray daily for God's deliverance. Our witness, which should and could be vigorous and storn, has been divided, and at times ludicrous, to our society, because we do not agree on what a "wholesome" relationship means. Some of the most extreme among us have used the disagreement without our body to foment difficulty and advance themselves and their causes. This is not of God. Surely, this is not of God.

I'm a traditionalist. That's right. I'm a traditionalist because I treasure and believe in the ethos of Anglicanism. As anglicans, we discern God's will through Scripture, tradition and reason. However, some have chosen to embrace biblical literalism instead of our Anglican tradition. History tells us that biblical literalism was used to support both the practice of slavery and the denigration of women. We have moved past slavery and we are moving past the oppression of women. It is time to move past using literalistic readings of the Bible to create prejudices against our gay and lesbian brothers and issters. Biblical literalism may be someone's tradition, but it's not our tradition and it's time we came home to our Anglican roots.

— excerpt from Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning's address to the 72nd General Convention, July 18, 1997

Praying diversity

The Episcopal Church must continually encompass ever greater diversity of language and images if God's diverse people are to worship authentically and joyfully. Where there are problems with liturgical change in congregations today, the reason is generally not in having too many liturgical forms, or too broad a spectrum of ways to speak about God; it is in the failure to nurture spiritual maturity which seeks the living God in the present moment, and not always in the static comfort of familiar words. Triennial General Conventions can't do much to form mature Christians, but last summer's Convention at least took some steps toward expanding and enriching our common worship.

The newly-constituted Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) was directed "to prepare a plan for liturgical revision and enrichment of the common worship of this church" reflecting the church's multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual and multigenerational composition.Revised and expanded Supplemental Liturgical Materials for the Eucharist and Daily Office were also authorized for use during the next three years, and the SCLM given authority to develop new pastoral liturgies. Two inclusive-language translations of the psalms were approved for study and use and a hymnal supplement of music by and about women was approved — but no funding is recommended in the budget. Awaking to the fact that Episcopal congregations worship in more than 20 languages *other* than English, Convention asked the SCLM to recommend translations of the Bible in these languages for addition to the list of approved translations.

Convention also commeded for study and discussion the recommendations of the Fifth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Renewing the Anglican Eucharist, and by calling for a task force to develop theological guidelines for future hymnody.

— Elizabeth Morris Downie. Downie is a clergy deputy from Eastern Michigan.

Bridging the left/right gap through world mission?

by Ian T. Douglas

Structural reform was supposed to be a hot issue at the 72nd General Convention. The Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church (SCS) had been given a mandate to review the structures of the episcopal Church as "if we were starting a new institution." for three years the SCS worked tirelessly to evaluate, review and propose new possibilities for the institutional organization of the Episcopal Church. To the SCS' credit, their work was done in consultation with other interim bodies and the executive agencies of the church. A "Comment Draft Report" released by the SCS in July of 1996 and responses to the draft were incorporated into the commission's final report.

For those who were looking for radical changes in the structures of the Episcopal Church, the SCS proposal to the General Convention was disappointing. At the macro level, the institutional organization of the Episcopal Church was left intact. Most recommendations of the SCS had to do with streamlining and consolidating the number and portfolios of the standing commissions and legislative committees of the General Convention and clarifying the responsibilities and powers of the Executive Council, the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop.

Under the watchful eye of a senior church politician, Byron Rushing of Massachusetts, chair of the House of Deputies legislative committee on structure, the majority of recommendations of the SCS were endorsed by the General Convention. Previous standing commissions concerned with evangelism, human affairs and metropolitan areas were replaced by a single Standing Commission on Domestic Mission and Evangelism. Likewise, the Councils for the Development of Ministry and the Board of Theological Education were combined under the new Standing Commission on Ministry and the standing commissions on Church Music and Liturgy became the new Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music. The number and portfolios of legislative committees, however, were left relatively intact.

At the executive level, the office of the President of the House of Deputies was made a Vice President of the Executive Council although a proposed salary for the post was turned away by the bishops. The role of Presiding Bishop was clarified as chief pastor and primate and a chief operation officer position was canonically mandated to help the Presiding Bishop manage the affairs of the Executive Council and staff. The convention also adopted a new unified budget combining the General Convention and "program" budgets of the national church.

The gulf between the perceived liberal leadership of the national church and the rising conservatives in the AAC may not be possible to bridge. The divisions between these two camps were especially evident in the debate over a proposed Partnership for World Mission.

But while these minor structural adjustments to the *status quo* were slowly crawling through the legislative process, few noticed that a new parallel structure in the Episcopal Church was beginning to raise its head. For over a year, conservative Episcopalians and like-minded agencies and organizations have been organizing themselves into one united voice. The American Anglican Council (AAC) was formed in August of 1996 to be a "network of individuals, parishes and specialized ministries who affirm biblical authority and Anglican orthodoxy in the Episcopal Church." Headquartered in Dallas, Tex., its leadership includes two bishops, James M. Stanton and Alex A. Dickson, along with a Virginia priest, John A.M. Guernsey, and Diane L. Knippers, President of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a Washington-based conservative political action committee.

Standing in the exhibit hall at the General Convention, a casual observer would not find a strong presence of the AAC. A keen eye would only find the AAC shield (a co-opted version of the Anglican Communion's compassrose) hanging in the Episcopalians United booth. But first impressions are misleading. Less than two blocks from the Convention Center stood the well-organized and well-funded General Convention headquarters for the AAC. Each day, AAC leadership would lead a luncheon briefing for bishops and deputies on legislation coming before the two houses. Deputies and bishops who found travel to the off-site AAC headquarters difficult were transported by a courtesy van.

Press releases originating in these daily AAC briefings announced that, "Days of passive acceptance [of liberal directions in the Episcopal Church] are over," and "Orthodox Episcopalians vow to reshape the future of the Episcopal Church." Said the IRD's Knippers: "We yearn for our church to devote its energies — not to defending homosexual activity — but to sustaining family life, building strong,

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worshiping congregations and expanding our evangelistic mission at home and abroad. Our goal is nothing less than to reshape the future of the Episcopal Church."

In a follow-up meeting immediately after the convention, the AAC and its supporters indicated that they are already beginning to prepare for a strengthened presence at the General Convention of 2000 in Denver.

The gulf between the perceived liberal leadership of the national church and the rising conservatives in the AAC may not be possible to bridge. The divisions between these two camps in the Episcopal Church were especially evident in the debate over a proposed Partnership for World Mission brought to Philadelphia by the Standing Commission on World Mission, on which I served. The proposed partnership sought to bring together over 40 diverse groups, agencies, national church bodies, parishes and dioceses involved in mission outside the U.S. under the auspices of the Standing Commission on World Mission. The fact that the breadth of those involved in the Partnership idea spanned the spectrum from the national church to the AAC caused both sides to consider the idea suspect. Old guard liberals were leery of the mission theology and methods of some of the more conservative mission groups involved in the partnership and sought to ensure that the national church would have ultimate authority over the group's activities. On the other hand, reactionary conservatives wondered why independent missionary organizations were willing to be in partnership with the General Convention and the established governance structures of the national church.

Neither side could see that despite profound differences across the political spectrum, the world mission community in the Episcopal Church has more to gain than to lose from working together.

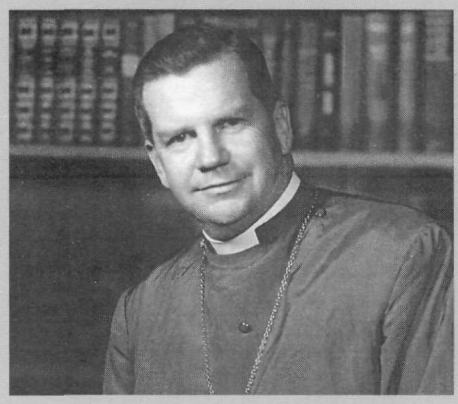
By the end of the General Convention, the wholeness and healthy witness of the world mission community had prevailed. The Partnership for Global Mission had been endorsed by both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, although serious, potentially debilitating, concessions had to be made — the partnership will be primarily accountable to the Episcopal Church through the Executive Council and not through the Standing Commission on World Mission, but with no funding from the program budget of the national church.

What remains unclear is whether the world mission community — or any other such mission-driven alliance in the church — will be able to continue to be a bridge between warring liberals and traditionalists as it works to realize its goals. The bifurcation between a perceived liberal establishment and a rising network of traditionalist Episcopalians is having a profound impact on the operation of the church. It seems that the rhetoric over the past triennium about "two Episcopal Churches" is no longer just talk.

John Elbridge Hines, 1910-1997

On July 21, about midway through the 72nd General Convention meeting in Philadelphia, the bishops, deputies and convention visitors celebrated the life of former Episcopal Church presiding bishop John Elbridge Hines during a Monday morning convention eucharist. Hines, who had been ill for some time, had died July 19 in Austin, Tex.

Elected bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of Texas at age 34, Hines is credited with the founding of a nationally known seminary, and an unusually large number of other church institutions. He also was a strong crusader for civil rights and economic justice. As presiding bishop Hines chose to confront head-on the powers and principalities exposed by the inner-city rebellions of the summer of 1967 with his General Convention Special Program for community empowerment.



John Elbridge Hines

Hines hoped this social justice initiative "would save the church's soul [and] show that the church had at least a partial understanding of what the cross meant," but many congregations protested the radical nature of the program by withholding funds from the national church. Critics of Hines' outspoken social justice leadership — he also played a pioneering role in the South Africa divestment movement during apartheid — believe his tenure as presiding bishop began the denomination on a path of crippling internal conflict and membership loss that it has continued to travel to the present day. However, many Episcopalians, including current presiding bishop Edmond L. Browning consider him a compelling role model.

"John Hines was a model of what it is to reflect the ocurage and compassion of Christ," Browning said during the Philadelphia convention.

"I am so grateful that I have had the opportunity to tell John Hines that he was my hero."

—based on a report from Episcopal News Service

continued from page 7

suffering greater in significance than his word of release to the captives and his call to reject the domination systems of this world. Or that a woman priest could stand up in an open hearing to defend her view (and the view of more than 80 other women priests like her) that the church would be committing the "sin of impatience" if it prevented the four bishops and dioceses that currently reject women's ordination from continuing to discriminate against women. Noting that racism still flourishes in this country despite the civil rights movement of the 1960s, she offered the opinion that legislating non-discrimination just doesn't work. As one African-American lay woman pointed out in disgusted rebuttal, "The civil rights laws may not have changed racist hearts, but at least they prevented people like me from continuing to be lynched."

But mind-boggling as some of the debate was, my deeper disappointment was with the prevailing atmosphere of the General Convention itself. First, everywhere I turned I encountered a pervasive focus on rank reinforced by clerical collars and exaggerated attention to (mostly clerical) titles. I am suspicious of glowing affirmations of "the ministry of the baptized" in such a context, and long for the day when the primary definition of "ministry" is what church members are doing to confront the powers and principalities of this world in their workplaces and community institutions and not some form of church-based pastoral care, religious education or sacramental leadership.

Likewise, the mindnumbing civility of speech couched in the language of Robert's Rules of Order and the attendant formality of the legislative process seemed to me to create, especially in the House of Deputies, a chilling atmosphere of diffident self-restraint that was in stark contrast to the life-and-death character of many of the issues the Convention considered with such unrelenting efficiency. Here, too, I'm skeptical that function follow form — it just doesn't seem likely to me that decisions made in such a polite, orderly and reticent way will be communicated to home dioceses and congregations with even a fraction of the passion necessary to inspire heartfelt commitment to these causes.

Finally, I was dismayed to find, even among people of a progressive/radical political bent, a strong mistrust of authority exercised in non-hierarchical ways. So oriented to the top-down, clericalist tradition of the institution were the deputies, in fact, that they rejected out of hand a proposal that, in addition to the bishops, they also be allowed to participate directly in the election of the church's presiding bishop. Bishops, we apparently believe, know best, despite the abundant evidence of experience and the superior wisdom we find in circles of mutual leadership and truth-telling.

In the end I cannot put aside, I confess, the nagging conviction that something is missing from the church's corporate life. And I'm well aware that this missing piece has little to do with how General Convention operates — the way we choose to make decisions is merely a reflection, I know, of what is beneath the surface.

But my fear is that in digging past appearances we will not find abundant treasure. As theologian and Scripture expert Verna Dozier reminds us in her compelling book, *The Dream of God* (Cowley, 1991), the institutional church in all of its forms has rejected God's call to participate "in God's dream of a good creation," with Jesus as the model.

Paradoxically, she says, the church carries the dream nonetheless. And, as one friend reminds me, "the church is a great place for meeting great people," people who crave to live the dream.

Organizational theorist Margarent Wheatley (see *TW* 5/97) tells us that these days people everywhere are hungry for heartfelt and sustained conversation about the things that matter to them most. It is this sort of discourse, she says, that will bring about the social change for which the biblical witness suggests God is longing. With this in mind, I was heartened to hear Frank Griswold speak of the church's need for deep, converting conversation in the context of his first sermon as presiding bishop-elect.

"Conversation — considering the views of others with an undefended heart — can be terrifying," Griswold said, "because conversation at this level exposes us to the possibility of encountering the mystery and imagination of God" in "the lived truth of another, a lived truth which frequently confutes and stretches and transforms our paltry and partial grasp."

Somehow, I am convinced, however painful, the church must make room for such embodied truth-telling. Without it, we will never get beyond a theology that says Jesus' best gift to us was his death.

New Jamestown 'Covenant'

The 1997 General Convention of the Episcopal Church voted to declare 1997-2007 a "Decade of Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation" for and with native peoples. The decade will be launched this November 1 — All Saints' Day — in Jamestown, Va., when representatives from many American Indian tribes and nations will meet with Episcopal Church leaders to sign a new Jamestown Covenant framed to create a new vision of mutual ministry and a new community of Gospel proclamation while taking honest stock of the past.

The year 2007 marks the 400th anniversary of the first permanent English settlement on American shores. In 1607 King James I stipulated that the Jamestown colonists were to share the Gospel with indigenous peoples of the western world, an act which launched an era of missionary outreach that eventually resulted in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The General Convention also called on the church to support initiatives like the Crazy Horse Defense Project, which opposes commercial exploitation of Native Americans and their symbols.

— based on ***Ikhana*** *and ENS reports*

Texas death row

by Herb Gunn

Texas Death Row, photographs by Ken Light, essay by Suzanne Donovan (University Press of Mississippi, 1997).

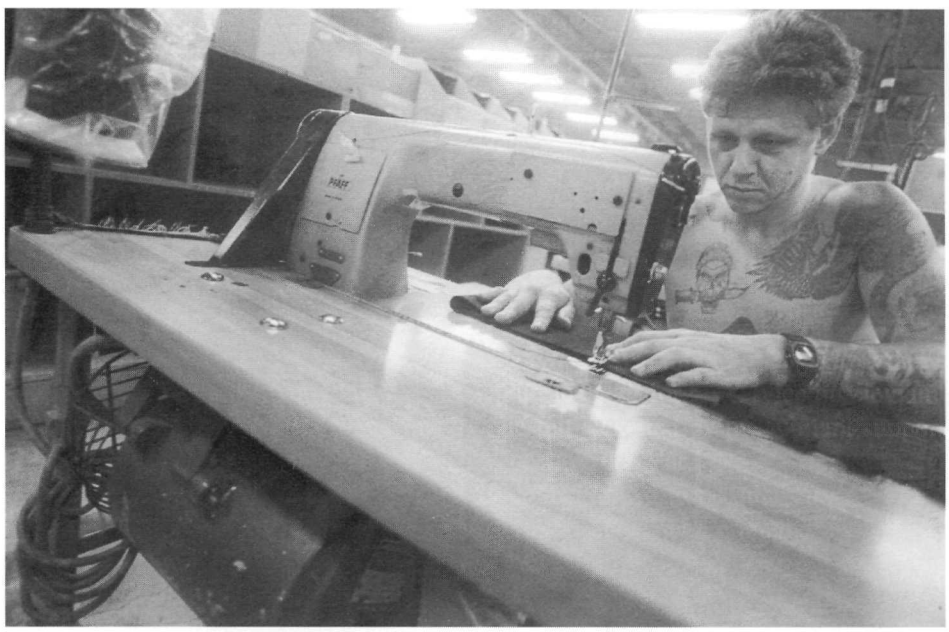
Ken Light's photography, and the prose by himself and Suzanne Donovan in *Texas Death Row* is a frank and unsentimental view of the concealed world of men awaiting execution.

Above all, the work is honest. It avoids slipping into a sideshow of cozy captives and death chair conversions that would cheapen the debate on capital punishment.

The authors dislodge the reader's stereotypes about life behind the walls of Ellis prison in Huntsville, Tex., which they visited on several occasions during 1994. In a few instances, they risk burlesque portraits of unhewn men with ribald wall hangings and tattoo-stained skin. Accompanying the sometimes frightful images are unabashed official accounts of the murder and mayhem discharged by those sentenced to die.

Some readers won't pick up the book twice. But those who do will discover images less about death than about life. It is a life of raw humanity — ambiguous, challenging and troubling — hidden from a nation where passions about the death penalty too often scorn ambiguity, where advocates on both sides might prefer the comforts of their own caricatures over the haunting images caught in black and white.

This is precisely the formidable contribution that *Texas Death Row* makes to the debate over capital punishment. Life on death row is reduced, squeezed into a mere sample of personal possessions and living quarters not much larger than a single bed. It is a world where a modicum of free movement is sometimes swapped for four hours of work in the prison garment factory — making clothes that may outlast the maker.



Sewing guards' uniform pants
Garment factory

Photo © Ken Light

More subtly, however, the book explores a confusion of the soul where the usual measurements of time and faith are disturbingly reordered.

Most of us live in a world in which death is defined by life and how it was lived. When death comes, it is celebrated because of the life and verve that preceded it and the hope of redemption that follows. But the decree of capital punishment reverses the theology; it creates life defined by death. Time is no longer measured from its source and origin forward but it is counted in days from its end backward. Capital punishment moves men and women toward death as the final outcome — no redemption and no hope.

"Hope is something I really can't afford in here," says one of the inmates interviewed. "Hope will kill you."

In one image, the worn face of Bobby West is sandwiched in the horizontal aperture of his maximum security cell. His gaze is haunting. He holds upright, as if captive as well, a snapshot of his boyish figure in a cub scout uniform.

Therein lies the gift of the book's uncensored view. It holds both sides accountable to look into the eyes and the lives of men on death row. TW

review

Herb Gunn is a photographer and editor of *The Record*, the newspaper of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan.

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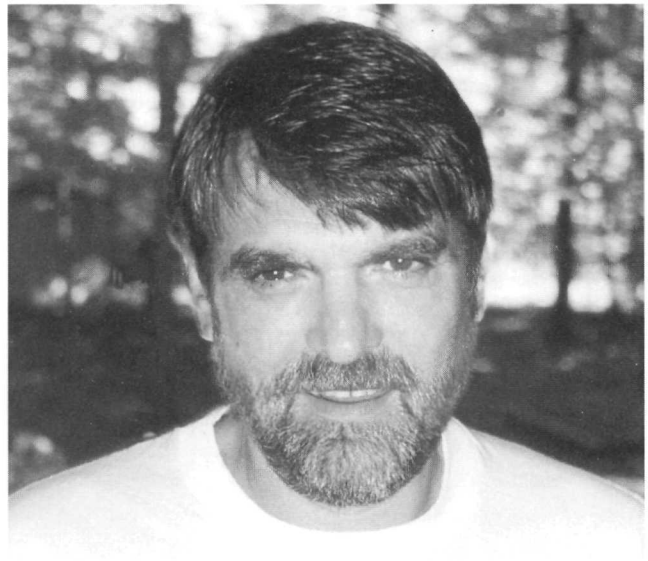


Bill Pelke

Moving toward abolition

by Marianne Arbogast

This past spring, Bill Pelke bought a bus and retired from his 30-year job as a crane operator at Bethlehem Steel, with plans to tour the country. The 1965 former Eastern Trailways cruiser is not most people's idea of a recreational vehicle — but then, recreation is not what Pelke has in mind.

The day Pelke retired — May 14 — was the twelfth anniversary of an event which changed the course of his life. On that day in 1985, his 78-year-old grandmother was murdered in her Gary, Ind. home by four ninth-grade girls who wanted money to go to a video arcade. In the aftermath of the tragedy, Pelke underwent a conversion which led him to extend forgiveness to those who killed his grandmother and devote his life to fighting the death penalty. His bus, christened "Abolition Movin'," will carry his campaign wherever the spirit moves.

The brutality of Ruth Pelke's death defies comprehension. Chosen because of her hospitality to neighborhood children, she willingly opened her door to the teens who inquired about taking Bible lessons. Once inside, one of the girls hit her over the head with a vase. Another, 15-year-old Paula Cooper, took a butcher knife from her purse and stabbed her 33 times, while the others searched for cash. They found $10 and a set of car keys. While Pelke lay dying, they drove her car to their high school and took several classmates for joyrides.

The girls were arrested and, over the next few months, three were convicted and sentenced to long prison terms. The fourth, Cooper, was regarded as the ringleader. As her trial approached, public sentiment strongly favored the death penalty. Pelke recalls that friends sought to console him with the words, "I hope the bitch burns." He did not disagree.

"I felt that if they didn't give the death penalty, they would be saying that my grandmother was not an important enough person to merit it," Pelke says. Leaving the courtroom after Cooper was sentenced to death, he told a reporter that "the judge did what he had to do."

For months, Pelke fought to suppress the painful image of his grandmother that haunted him. "Whenever I thought about my grandmother, I pictured how she died — butchered on the dining room floor where our family had gathered for so many years on joyous occasions."

More immediate personal struggles enabled Pelke to "put the murder and the trials on a back burner," he says. The breakup of a long-term relationship with the woman he was later to marry pushed him into a serious depression.

One afternoon in November, as Pelke sat high above the ground in the cab of his crane during a lull in his workday, he found himself in tears.

"I asked God why, why, why?" Pelke says. Painful memories assaulted him — the loss of a childhood sweetheart, combat and injury in Vietnam, a troubled marriage, divorce and separation from his three children, and the nightmarish death of his grandmother.

But as he prayed, a new image rose in his mind.

"I began to picture my grandmother in tears," Pelke says. "I began thinking about what she believed in, and there was no doubt in my mind that her tears were tears of compassion for this girl on death row and for her family.

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

"My mind flashed back to the day Paula was sentenced to death. Her grandfather began to wail, 'They're going to kill my baby,' and had to be escorted from the courtroom. As Paula was led away, tears were rolling off her cheeks onto her dress, causing dark blotches.

"I thought about my grandmother's faith and what the Bible taught about forgiveness. I knew Nana would not have wanted Paula put to death, and I felt like she wanted someone in our family to have the same compassion. I begged God to give me love and compassion for Paula Cooper and her family."

Pelke knew that his prayer had been answered when he started to think about what he could do for Cooper.

"I wanted to try to help her in any way I could, and I realized it would be terribly wrong for the state of Indiana to put her in the electric chair and send volts of electricity through her body."

From that moment, Pelke began to remember his grandmother alive and loving, "the way she lived and what she stood for and who she was," he says. "It was such a relief."

Immediately, he began writing Cooper, and at Christmas time, went to visit her grandfather.

The reaction of Pelke's family and friends was mixed. While many were impelled to rethink their own positions, others were confused and even hostile.

"One of the most hurtful things people say is, 'You must not have loved your grandmother very much,'" Pelke says. "I was told that by somebody very close to me."

At a friend's urging, Pelke wrote an article for a local paper. Soon afterwards, he was interviewed by an Italian journalist, and then asked to travel to Italy to appear on a television program.

"The Italians, who do not have a death penalty, could not understand why the state would want to execute someone who was only 15 years old," Pelke says.

His trip to Italy drew widespread media coverage and fueled a campaign for Cooper's removal from death row. Forty thousand Italians, mostly school children, signed a petition on her behalf, and the pope appealed for clemency.

"Eventually, in 1989, because of international embarrassment, the law was changed," Pelke says. "Before that, a 10-year-old could have gotten the electric chair in Indiana."

Although the age for legal execution was raised to 16, the court initially stipulated that Cooper would still be held under the old law. Later, her sentence was commuted to 60 years in prison.

A co-founder of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, Pelke says that forgiving Cooper "did more for me than it did for Paula."

"I don't go out and debate the death penalty," he says. "What we do is share our stories of the violence that took place in our lives, and share the healing.

"I watched the families of the Oklahoma bombing victims express so much pain and anger, and I know that what we're talking about can help them."

Pelke is troubled by the way the legal system manipulates grieving families.

"They are told by the courts that the death penalty is justice, that it is their only hope for closure and healing. But the day after the execution, they still have the hurt and pain and anger.

"They are not told about alternatives, such as life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, with the perpetrator doing work and putting money into a victims' fund, for counseling or support of families who have lost a breadwinner."

Letters and meetings between victims and perpetrators are also discouraged.

"Many people in prison would like to have contact with victims' families, but attorneys are generally opposed," Pelke says. "Defense attorneys are afraid their clients might say something that could be used against them."

Although Pelke and Cooper exchanged hundreds of letters, it was not until 1994 that he was finally allowed to visit her. He has continued to visit regularly.

His life has changed in many ways, Pelke says.

"I learned that forgiveness should be a way of life. There were people I had been working with whom I had held a grudge against for 10 years. I realized if I was going to forgive Paula and hold a grudge against others, I would be a hypocrite."

He also found himself re-examining other views. Although he was awarded a Purple Heart for his service in Vietnam, he felt sickened by the jubilant support for the Gulf War.

"There had to be other ways," Pelke says. "I have seen enough death, and I don't want to see any more."

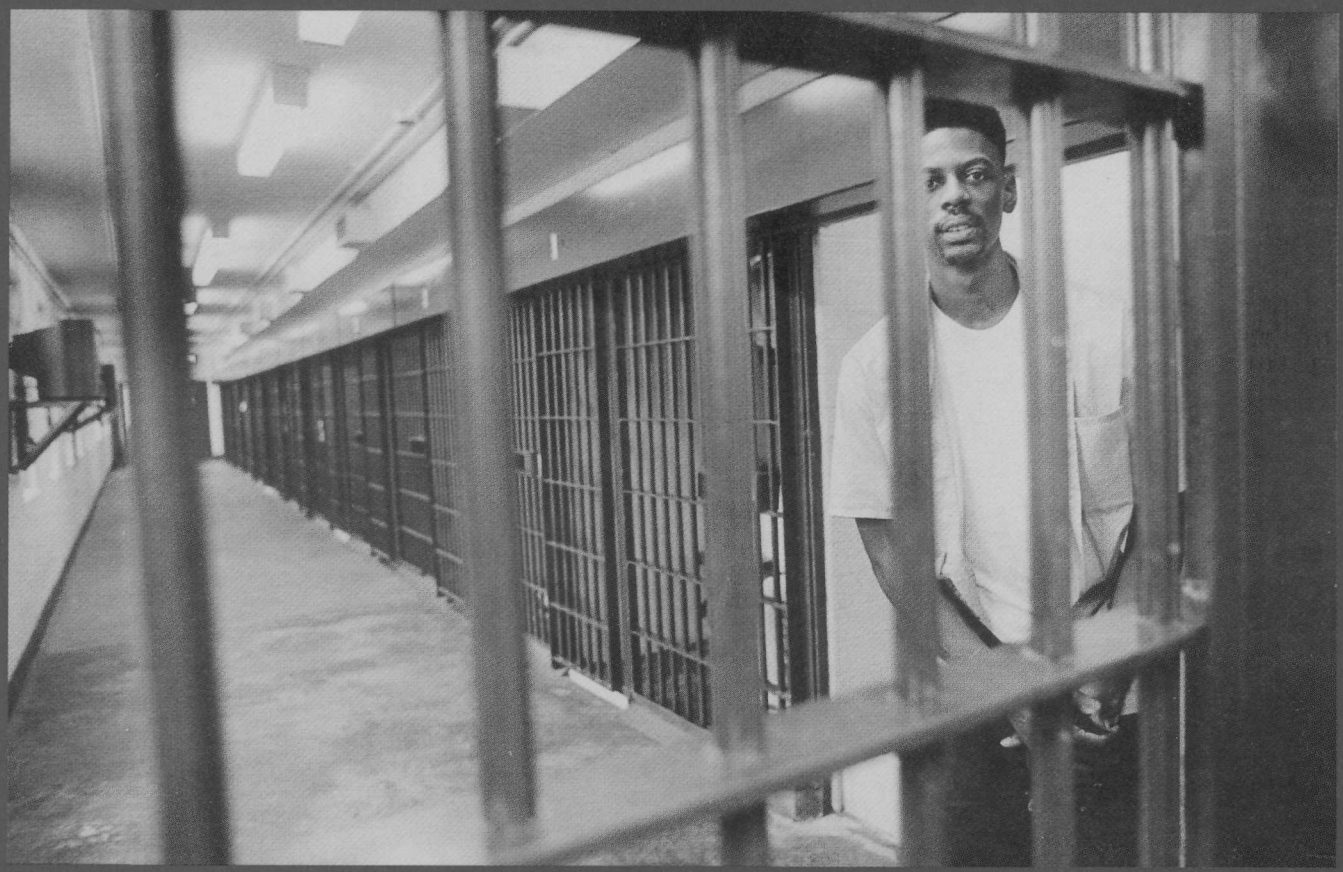
"Abolition Movin'" is both practical and symbolic, concretizing Pelke's commitment to be there for the long haul.

In June, he drove it to Washington, D.C., where he and others were on trial for unfurling an anti-death-penalty banner on the steps of the Supreme Court building on the anniversary of the first execution following reinstatement of the death penalty in the U.S.

"It was amazing to see the excitement the bus generated," he says, recounting a breakdown in a McDonald's parking lot that occasioned a string of conversations with restaurant patrons. During the trial and an overlapping fast and vigil, Pelke drove vigilers to Baltimore to protest an execution there.

"This is not something that will be over in a couple of years," he says.

"But I have seen many people whose hearts were touched, who changed their minds. People realize the death penalty is not doing what the politicians say. I plan to travel around until it is abolished." TW



Edie Mitchell, on death row in Louisiana in 1994

Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals

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