

*The prison-industrial complex:
counting the cost*



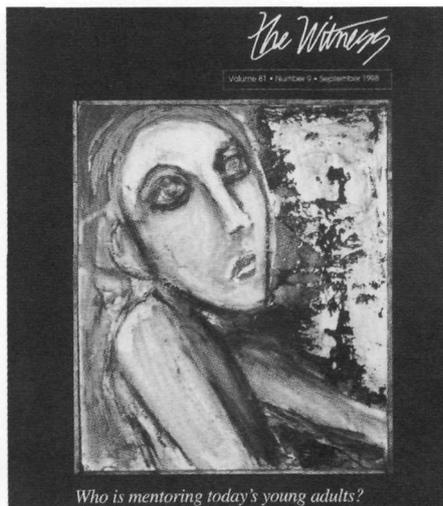
Mentoring the next generation

I HAVE RECEIVED AND READ every issue that comes from my *Witness* subscription with a great deal of appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in putting together a publication of such quality and substance. It is always welcome because it nurtures my mind and spirit in ways that many other publications, and aspects of society in general, do not.

Your September issue was especially significant to me because I am one of the young adults who were the focus of the issue. I believe that the mentorship that we young adults need more on the journeys we are all engaged in is less of an apprenticeship with a learned elder (though some of these relationships are truly beneficial) and more of the spiritual nourishment and reinforcement that was offered in your September issue.

I completely agree with the authors of *Common Fire* (and in fact went out and purchased the book) when they were quoted as saying that it is the task of young adults to find our dreams and work on them. We young adults are diverse not only in the communities we come from but also in the dreams that we hold and work for and this diversity is good, should be welcomed and encouraged. I feel *The Witness* welcomed and encouraged the dreams of young adults in the September issue and thank you for it.

The article on spirituality in education was also timely and profound for me as I am in graduate school and have experienced the exhilaration of finding meaning in the research and applied aspects of my degree program and the many difficulties that arise from encountering people who are not aware of their own meaning for teaching, engaging in research or being a student. Often being a member of a community that has not been welcomed into the academy and whose numbers are few and far between can make the



journey through higher education even more difficult. Reading Victor Kazanjian's article on "Reuniting mind with spirit" was a reminder of why I began graduate study and what I hope to accomplish through it. It reinforced something the poet Nikki Giovanni said — that we are "responsible for the life we live and the world we live in" — that has been of particular relevance for me.

Thank you, *Witness*, for serving to mentor me with your September issue by reminding me of my purpose and for mentoring all of those — including young adults — who read your publication regularly.

Edith G. Arrington
Philadelphia, PA

Trickster spirit

MY SYMPATHIES SUPPORT what Michael Moore has done on behalf of U.S. workers in both his movies, which *The Witness* deservedly supports. Justice of course calls for more effective channels within the U.S. to counteract the sinful and ultimately dangerous gap in lifestyles and values between rich and poor. Yet there is also such a gap between our wealthy U.S. and poor nations. We see national and world stages both being run mostly by the power of wealth, more often exploitively than helpfully, characteristic of most of history. Since Jesus taught "the love of money is the root of all evil," we clearly still have a long way to go toward developing cultural structures and channels that provide needed economic checks and balances, incentives and

controls, to lead us into better stewardship of wealth on behalf of justice and peace.

To do it we need a combination of influence from Christian prophetic insight and spirit, plus a well developed plan and philosophy of their application to modern technology and social structures. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Max Webber, authors of the U.S. Constitution, etc. all have made significant starts in this direction. I hope God's providence inspires in us soon the practical vision now needed economically and politically that speaks to this problem for both national and international stages in a mutually helpful way.

David W. Cammack
Baltimore, MD

I WANTED TO WRITE AND EXPRESS my deep joy at finding your powerful and necessary publication. I work with the homeless and working poor in Denver and have appreciated the ways in which *The Witness* speaks to social realities from an unflinching perspective of faith and compassion. I will certainly be subscribing.

However, I felt the need to write about Joe Summers' article "Unpacking anti-racism" in the July/August 1998 issue. I appreciated the depth of thought and reflection with which Summers struggled with the lack of complexity in many anti-racism workshops. I share his concerns about the over-simplification of institutional and personal racism in much of the anti-racism curriculum. He is right; these issues are not "black and white."

But, as I read the article something kept nagging me. Halfway through, I realized that my experience as a Latino in the anti-racism struggle was completely missing.

I grew up in South Texas where the issues were more "Brown and White" than "Black and White." Is that regional reality a constant "misfit" to the binary black and white understanding of race in America? Must we cling to the need for a national symbolic narrative that silences and excludes the realities of the growing Latino and Asian populations? When I point out this erasure the usual response is a "yes but" or a shrug and a look of "yeah, yeah whatever." The reason Italians were assimilated to "whiteness," as Summers pointed out, is because the duality of "black and white" offered no third or fourth ways of being.

Letters

The continued use of a dualistic paradigm helps no one. It simply upholds the antagonistic "victim/perpetrator" model Summers is so dedicated to dismantling. We must get over the dichotomies of a past time that served no one to justice and did little to reflect the realities of any day. A vision recognizing the multicultural complexity and promise of our society is essential to creating a future of justice and community where all voices are heard harmonic.

Dan Vera
Denver, CO

IN ALL THE CHURCH PUBLICATIONS I get, with all the controversy, debate and even hostility, I have rarely seen an article expressing hope that we can actually have the dialogue we keep saying we want. Finally you have published that article.

"Can we talk?" [TW 7-8/98, dialogue between Julie A. Wortman and Douglas LeBlanc] is the most hopeful thing on our infighting which I have ever seen in an Episcopal publication. Thank you.

Blaine R. Hammond
Seaview, WA

Christians and Buddhist wisdom

PLEASE SEND ME FOUR COPIES of your June 1998 *Witness* on Christians and Buddhist wisdom. I am making my first Buddhist or Zen retreat. I found your latest issue very meaningful and helpful.

Marie Joseph, RSM
Rochester, NY

WILL YOU PLEASE SEND A COPY of Christians and Buddhist Wisdom to the enclosed five addresses. As you can see, I particularly resonated to this issue and want to share it with others.

Elvira Charles
Washington, CT

The Episcopal Church in conflict

THANKS FOR THE TERRIFIC WORK on conflict and change, especially Verna's (Dozier) articles.

Fredrica Thompsett
Cambridge, MA



Classifieds

Rector watch

Total ministry parish seeks part-time priest for the next three years or so. If you understand "total ministry," would like to live in Colorado, don't need to preach every Sunday or cover all the ministries, would like to help a lively, established parish get into and up to speed in a brand new facility, contact the parish administrator at P.O. Box 29279, Thornton, CO 80229.

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1999-2000 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

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.

Prisoners need stamps

Christian prisoner project seeks donations of postage stamps (limit: two books of 20 each). Help inmates keep in touch with loved ones at Christmas. Christian Williams, FSP, Rt. D18367, Represa, CA 95671-5071.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication.

The Witness

Volume 81 • Number 11 • November 1998

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A car theft incident handled by a Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) illustrates the principles of restorative justice in action.

Cover: Prisoner by Edward Bisone.

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 of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

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Prisons: profits and prophecy

by Marianne Arbogast

A teenaged volunteer at Detroit's Catholic Worker house once startled an older community member by explaining to a suburban church group that the people who eat at the soup kitchen are "mostly criminals." Although we laughed at the time, his assertion was both tragic and irrefutable. Many of our soup kitchen guests do, in fact, have prison records. Joe Summers attests that the reverse is also true: The people found in our prisons are largely the same people encountered in emergency shelters [p.18].

Today, when public sympathy for the homeless has worn thin and welfare policies punish the poor solely for their poverty, this may have less shock value. Criminals are the poor. The poor are criminals. Economics has a great deal to do with who ends up behind bars.

"If you have money and you're white, you go to the Betty Ford Clinic," said one participant at a recent roundtable gathering of prison reform activists, noting the high rate (around 80 percent) of criminal convictions in which drug or alcohol abuse is a factor. "If you're poor, Latino or black, you go to prison."

The accelerating rate at which the U.S. imprisons its citizens is an attempt to "disappear" social problems by disappearing people, suggests former political prisoner Angela Davis.

"Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated

to cages," Davis writes (*ColorLines*, Fall, 1998). But she goes on to note a more alarming development: "The practice of disappearing vast numbers of people from poor, immigrant and racially marginalized communities has literally become big business."

Advocates of restorative justice point out that retributive justice approaches tend to "disappear" crime victims as well as offenders.

Private industry is seeking to cash in on prison expansion [p. 8]. Struggling communities look to prisons as a source of jobs. The mix of profitability, the sometimes murky government-business partnership, the drain on public finances and the lack of a socially useful product have led Davis and others to begin speaking of a "prison-industrial complex."

Like the military-industrial complex, it is fueled by fear and requires a common enemy — conveniently at hand in the welfare recipients we have already demonized. To sustain the myth that prisoners are evil people, real contact with people in prison is minimized. More and more, prisoners are isolated — even from each other — in high-security, control-unit facilities.

But it is not only the incarcerated who are victims of the prison principality. The specter of Third World-style labor markets within prisons has mobilized both prison and labor activists to warn of the implications for all of us [p. 14]. On a more fundamental level, the prison sys-

tem seems to thwart justice itself, with assumptions that obstruct positive change.

A small but growing prophetic voice can be found in the "restorative justice" movement, which challenges the assumptions of "retributive justice" and models alternatives, such as the Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs now operating in many places. Duane Ruth-Heffebower explains the principles of restorative justice and describes a VORP process in operation [p. 21].

Advocates of restorative justice point out that retributive justice approaches tend to "disappear" crime victims as well as offenders. They stress the primacy of repairing community and human relationships. Costs are low. There is little profit in it.

Study after study demonstrates that alternatives to prison — as well as substantial drug treatment and education programs within prisons — can significantly reduce recidivism while avoiding the financial drain of long-term incarceration. Implementing these alternatives could free up resources to be spent where they might really count — on education, health care, housing and community development. If this is not happening, it may be because we are dealing with forces larger than we have yet grasped.

"The growth of the prison-industrial complex is part of globalization," another participant at the roundtable gathering declared. "The system we're dealing with is the whole world."

For people of faith, the challenge is to act on the gospel promise that this "world" has already been overcome. **TW**



editor's note

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

Going hungry: news that really matters

by Norman Solomon

Two days after many TV networks aired every moment of Bill Clinton's grand-jury testimony, several members of Congress teamed up with researchers and activists for a dramatic forum about "economic human rights." The independent hearing focused on matters of profound importance — and the big news media ignored it.

The gathering took place on Capitol Hill, right under the noses of the Washington press corps. And the media establishment stayed away in droves. Not a single TV camera was there. In fact, hardly any journalists showed up.

"Thirty million Americans are hungry," notes the Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as "Food First," which helped to organize the Sept. 23 forum. Somewhere between 5 million and 7 million are homeless. "More than 40 million Americans have no health insurance. And the country has the highest rate of child poverty among the industrialized countries."

The institute emphasizes that "hunger is not an accident, in the U.S. or anywhere else. There is no scarcity of food in the world. Certainly there's no shortage here in America." Yet, "the number of hungry people in America has increased by half since 1985."

While we keep being told that the nation's economy is robust, inequities

Norman Solomon is co-author of *Wizards of Media Oz: Behind the Curtain of Mainstream News* and author of *The Trouble With Dilbert: How Corporate Culture Gets the Last Laugh*.

continue to widen. "Sure, there are more millionaires than ever in the U.S.," says Food First. "But for every new millionaire, there are countless new hungry people for whom \$100 or \$200 a month in food stamps is the only safeguard against

*Sometimes, I would roll
bread up into little dough
balls to try to fill myself up.
It gets to a point where you
kind of get used to it.*

— Katherine Engles

malnutrition, even starvation."

So, why don't we hear more about hunger in the U.S.? A key factor is the media industry's fixation on demographics. "Because the mass media is aimed at the people with the highest disposable income, we see pictures of hunger overseas, but not our own," Food First observes. "Perhaps that's a reason why the growth of the Hunger Class has been ignored politically."

The forum on economic human rights included testimony from scholars. But there were also firsthand accounts of being hungry in America. "It isn't that I never worked," said a grandmother named Katherine Engles. "I worked since I was 14 years old. The jobs that are out there — you are not making enough in order to live. Mothers go hungry at night so their children can eat."

In the glazed-over eyes of editors in Washington, her words were not signifi-

cant. But they remain: "When you are hungry, it's really hard. Sometimes, I would psyche myself to a cup of tea and try to make myself feel as though I just ate a full-course meal even though I didn't. Sometimes, I would roll bread up into little dough balls to try to fill myself up. It gets to a point where you kind of get used to it. Till today, I can't eat no more than one meal a day. It's what I am used to, and even today it's about all we can afford anyway."

And, she added: "I keep looking at the bigger issue. What's ahead for our children, our grandchildren? What is ahead for them?"

Engles was one of 200 people, many of them poor, who filled the room in the Rayburn House Office Building to support a "Fairness Agenda for America." The media odds were stacked against them — and not only because of the frenzy over President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky.

Major media outlets have usually stayed away from efforts to challenge economic disparities. Traditional news judgment dictates that journalists tread lightly on the subject of who really wields the economic power — and at whose expense — in the U.S.

(Although media gatekeepers blocked the recent forum in Washington, plenty of information is available on the web — at <www.foodfirst.org> and <www.net-progress.org>).

People fighting for economic human rights have always had an uphill battle for space in the mass media. Now the terrain is tilted against them more than ever.

Can you imagine what would have happened this year if the news media concentrated on hunger in America with the same fierce determination that has pervaded coverage of sex near the Oval Office? By now, life would be much better for a lot of children who will go to bed hungry tonight. TW

The New Warden

by Jimmy Santiago Baca

He sat in the cool morning.
He had a handful of seeds in his palm.
He sat there contemplating
Where he would plant them.
A month later he tore the kitchen down
and planted apple seeds there.
Some of the convicts asked him why:
"Apples," he said, "is one of America's
great traditional prides. Remember
the famous ballad Johnny Apple Seed?"
Nobody had heard of it, so he set up
A poetry workshop where the death house had been.
The chair was burned in a great ceremony.
Some of the Indian convicts performed
Ancient rituals for the souls of those executed in the past.
He sold most of the bricks and built
Little ovens in the earth with the rest.
The hospital was destroyed except for one new wing
To keep the especially infirm aged ones.
And, funny thing, no one was ever sick.
The warden said something about freedom being
the greatest cure
For any and all ailments. He was right.
The cellblocks were razed to the ground.
Some of the steel was kept and a blacksmith shop went up.
With the extra bricks the warden purchased
Tents, farming implements and a bought a big yellow bus.
The adjoining fields flowed rich with tomatoes, pumpkins,
Potatoes, corn, chili, alfalfa, cucumbers.
From the nearby town of Florence, and as far away as Las
Cruces,
People came to buy up loads and loads of vegetables.
In one section of the compound the artists painted
Easter and Christmas and other holiday cards, on paper
previously used for disciplinary reports.
The government even commissioned some of the convicts
To design patriotic emblems.
A little group of engineers, plumbers, electricians
Began building solar heating systems and sold them
To elementary schools way under cost. Then,
Some citizens grew interested. Some high school kids
Were invited to learn about it, and soon,

Solar systems were being installed in the community.
An agricultural program opened up.
Unruly convicts were shipped out to another prison.
After the first year, the new warden installed ballot boxes.
A radio and TV shop opened. Some of the convicts' sons
And daughters came into prison to learn from their fathers'
trades and talking with them about life.
This led to several groups opening up sessions dealing with
Language, logic, and delving into past myths and customs.
Blacks, Mejicanos, Whites, all had so much to offer.
They were invited to speak at the nearby university
Discussing what they found to be untouched by past historians.
Each day six groups of convicts went into the community,
Working for the aged and infirmed.
One old convict ended up marrying the governor's mother.

— Half Chicano and half "detrribalized Apache," Jimmy Santiago Baca lived in a New Mexico orphanage from the time he was five till he turned 11, when he fled it to live in the streets. At age 20, he was sentenced to a long term in an Arizona maximum security prison, where he spent four years in solitary and was subjected to electric shock treatments. In the hole, Baca taught himself to read and write and began composing poetry. Today he has achieved international recognition as a major American poet, has taught in universities and received several prestigious prizes for his work. "The New Warden," by Jimmy Santiago Baca: Copyright © 1990 by Jimmy Santiago Baca. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.



The prison boom: corporate profits, human losses

by Sam Hine

It's the fastest growing industry in America. One of the most influential political lobbies. A hot ticket on the New York Stock Exchange. Some observers, boggled by the insanity of its logic and alarmed by its momentum, have started calling it the prison-industrial complex: a faceless corporate monolith like its sibling, the military-industrial complex.

The FBI has reported a drop in crime for five straight years, but even though violent crime is at a 25-year low, the rush to incarceration hasn't begun to abate. American prisons currently cage 1.9 million human beings, one in every 240 citizens. The criminal justice system costs taxpayers upwards of \$100 billion every year, roughly 10 percent of our tax dollars. (The crimes allegedly being combated deprive individual Americans of only \$10 billion annually. So, for every dollar lost by victims of crime, we spend \$10 to apprehend and punish the perpetrator.)

Someone pockets all that cash. Those who benefit from the prison boom range from the architects who design more sophisticated and efficient prisons to the academics who get major grants to produce the statistics we love to quote. Few benefit more than the companies using the labor of this captive population.

Public industries, such as the Federal Bureau of Prison's UNICOR, enjoy spe-

cial terms with other government agencies, and produce everything from furniture and uniforms to missile components. States operate similar prison factories. Delaware prisoners recently saved the state \$25 million, working for 15 cents an hour to build, of all things, another prison.

Increasingly, private industry is looking for opportunities to cash in. Where else do you find labor rates comparable to

Prison corporations are paid by the head, so overcrowding, fewer services and cheaper food provide greater profits, as does reducing pay and training for guards.

the Third World without the shipping costs, and a regimented workforce that can't unionize and doesn't require worker's compensation?

Prisons for profit

The last 15 years have seen the rise of a new manifestation of justice as a commodity — the private prison. “You just sell it like you were selling cars or real estate or hamburgers,” explained Thomas Beasley, co-founder of Corrections Corporation of America (C.C.A.), near the start of privatization in 1983. Far and away the industry leader, C.C.A. currently houses 65,000 prisoners in 79 privately owned and operated facilities in 25 states. Their mission: “to provide quality corrections at less cost to the taxpayer.” Wackenhut Corrections comes in second

with 40 facilities, and is the market leader overseas, with prisons in the United Kingdom and Australia.

The concept is brilliant: Innovation sparked by free-market competition will lead to more efficient management — and supposedly, savings. A few years into the venture, however, government reports suggest that while the corporations involved have profited handsomely — with C.C.A. ranking among the top five companies on the New York Stock Exchange over the last three years — the taxpayer has not. A 1996 report by the General Accounting Office compared private prisons to similar state-run institutions and found no significant savings. To increase their own profits, private prisons undercut state spending by as narrow a margin as they can.

Whether we need them or not, more of these prisons are going up every year. And if recent history is any judge, as long as new prisons are built, they will be filled. Overcrowded states have begun to “farm out” prisoners to places such as Texas, where the building spree has outpaced local demand. (Private prisons in Texas received a bad rap last year, when the media released videotape showing guards beating and kicking Missouri prisoners in the groin, making them crawl on the floor and allowing guard dogs to bite them.)

Families of offenders are not the only ones inconvenienced when prisoners become exports. In one legal snafu, two Oregon sex offenders escaped from a privately run detention center in Houston. As there was no law against escaping from a private institution, the state police would have been unable to arrest them, had the escapees not solved the dilemma themselves by stealing a car. Predictably, the state wasted no time in outlawing future escapes.

Conflict of interest

Many people are uncomfortable with the

Sam Hine is a member of the Bruderhof community and works on inmate advocacy with the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

thought of someone profiting from another person's incarceration. Others object to passing governmental authority and power into private hands. But the real problem with C.C.A. and its competitors is a fundamental conflict of interest: While they claim to be in the business of "correction," as profit-making institutions they have a financial incentive, not to rehabilitate, but to keep people in prison as long as possible, and preferably, to have them return. Prison corporations are paid by the head, so overcrowding, fewer services and cheaper food provide greater profits, as does reducing pay and training for guards.

Last year C.C.A. created the Prison Realty Trust, a company devoted exclusively to speculating on prisons as real estate. The first stock market offering brought in \$388 million. A year later, Prison Realty Trust and C.C.A. have agreed to merge, in a deal valued at \$4 billion, which will also swallow competitor U.S. Corrections Corporation. Analysts suggest that private prison corporations will double their "market share" in the next five years.

Outspoken opponents to privatization include the American Bar Association, the National Sheriffs Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union. But not all criminal justice reformers oppose private prisons outright. William DiMascio, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, an inmate advocacy group, says that while he may have philosophical objections to prisons for profit, he has seen cases where private prisons are doing a better job. "Whatever you find to be wrong or bad in privately run prisons you will also find in public prisons," DiMascio says. He suggests that the controversy surrounding the move toward privatization has brought increased scrutiny to both public and private institutions, which holds everyone more accountable.

Political payoffs

Why don't elected officials protest this erosion of their sovereignty? One reason may be that many of them profit from crime, and not only politically. Tennessee offers a case in point. According to *The Nation*, "as former chairman of the state G.O.P., [C.C.A. founder] Beasley was a good friend of then-Governor Lamar Alexander. In 1985 Alexander backed a plan to hand over the entire state prison system to the fledgling company for \$200 million. Among C.C.A.'s stock holders at the time were the Governor's wife,

exaggerated fear of crime instilled in Americans by the media's zeal in sensationalizing bad news. (Crime pays for media, too, which may or may not explain why *USA Today* co-sponsored a 1998 "Entrepreneur of the Year" award given to C.C.A. Chairman, CEO, and President Doc Crants.)

Economically strapped rural towns vie for new prison contracts, which are touted as "recession-proof employment." In Waynesburg, at the heart of Greene County, Pennsylvania, Confederate flags are still a common sight. Waynesburg



Dannemora, a small rural town, has 1,215 residents and houses 2,928 prisoners at the Clinton Correctional Facility, located in the center of town. The economy of this upstate region of New York relies heavily on housing convicts from New York City.

Andrew Lichtenstein, Impact Visuals

Honey, and Ned McWherter, the influential Speaker of the state House, who succeeded Alexander as governor." Although that original plan failed, Tennessee has since agreed to give C.C.A. its entire prison system.

Crime, politicians know, is a handy rhetorical enemy. It pays to play on the

was once a mining center. Now it's a prison town, with the entire local economy geared to providing services for its three penal institutions and their employees.

"Get tough" policies

Waynesburg hosts Pennsylvania's flagship super-maximum security facility, the State Correctional Institution at Greene,

The spider

by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Norman called over, his voice heavy and strangely conspiratorial. “Hey, Mu. Ya bizzy, man?”

“Naw, Norm. I wuz jus doin’ a little readin’. But wussup, man?”

“I been lookin’ at this mama spider in my cell. She beautiful, man!”

“Yeah?”

“She tiny, but she so strong, man!”

“Uh, huh ...”

“An’ ya know what’s amazin’?”

“Whut’s dat, Norm?”

“Think ‘bout how she make her own home — her web — out of her own body!”

“That’s amazin’, man.”

And indeed it was amazing, especially to Norman, a man engaged in utter isolation. Here he sat, and would sit for the remainder of his days, in the antiseptic stillness of a supermaximum-security prison block, yet he was not entirely alone. With a quiet, unwitting bravado that defied the State’s most stringent efforts to quarantine him, spiders had moved in and built webs in the dark corner under his sink. Now they shared his cell, and he spent hours watching them spin their miraculous silken thread.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a radio-journalist on death row in Pennsylvania following a criminal trial and murder conviction, widely believed to have been politically motivated and conducted in a biased manner. This story is excerpted from his book *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience*, Plough Publishing House, 1997.

Norman watched them give birth. He watched them stalk those few rare flies who entered his cell, only to be trapped. He watched them suck the life sap from their prey until nothing remained but dry husks. He watched them in a deep and reverent wonder, and his cell became a study.

Norman watched, and whenever something truly remarkable occurred, he quietly tapped on the wall. He’d begin in a deep stage-whisper: “Mu — Yo, Mu! Ya

*With a quiet, unwitting
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State’s most stringent
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under his sink.*

bizzy, man?”

I was rarely too busy to listen for 15 or 20 minutes, and it wasn’t long before I found myself sharing his fascination and enthusiasm. And in time, lo and behold, a web scaffold appeared in my own sink-corner.

In ancient African and West Indian folklore, the mother spider — Anansi — looms large. She is a wise and protective being who knows proverbs and possesses the gift of prophecy.

A famous Ghanian tale tells of a fire raging in a forest. As the beasts scamper for safety, an antelope feels a tickling

sensation. A small dark spider has alighted on her ear. Before she can toss her head to flick it off, however, the spider whispers, “It is I, Anansi. Take me with you — I will repay you.” The antelope, more concerned with its own survival than the minor inconvenience of a spider, agrees and runs on to safety, her path directed by Anansi.

Once she reaches safety, Anansi climbs off, thanking the antelope and promising her she won’t be forgotten. Several seasons later, the antelope finds herself and her offspring threatened again, this time by hunters. Her little one is too young to run, so she instructs it to drop to the ground and hide itself in the shrubbery. Then, leaping from the undergrowth, she distracts the hunters and leads them away from her baby. Arrows whiz through the air, but the antelope is too swift. Finally the hunters give up the chase and leave the forest.

Cautiously, she returns to find her young one, whose faint cry she hears but cannot place. Where is her baby? Try as she might, she can’t find her.

Just then, Anansi lets herself down from a tree limb on her slim silken cord, and announces her presence. Whispering to the mother antelope, she directs her to a clump of shrubs where, hidden under a tightly woven protective net, lies her baby. “I told you I wouldn’t forget you,” Anansi reminds her.

For Norman, the target of a hunt no less deadly than that of an antelope in the jungle, Anansi was vital company. In a cell constructed to maximize human loneliness — a site designed to kill the mind — Anansi was a source of friendship and wonder. In a concrete tomb erected to smother men to death, she was a tiny, marvelous reflection of life. **TV**

which prides itself in outdating the long-unrivaled federal facility in Marion, Ill., which went on permanent lockdown in 1983, creating the first “control unit.” SCI Greene is now preserved in infamy by resident journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal’s devastating exposés. In his book *Death Blossoms*, Abu-Jamal describes the “antiseptic stillness” of a soundproof solitary confinement cell designed to “maximize human loneliness,” where he is held 23 hours a day with the lights on.

The rising popularity of the super-max prison is only one aspect of a more pervasive “get tough” policy, which shows itself in harsher sentencing — such as California’s new “three strikes and you’re out” law — and cuts in inmate education, job skill training and the amenities that make prison life bearable.

The number of women in prison continues to grow, as does the number of juveniles, with one state after another passing laws dispensing with juvenile justice for young violent offenders. In the high-profile Massachusetts case of Edward O’Brien, arrested and charged with murder at age 15, the district attorney’s office succeeded in having Judge Paul P. Heffernan recused from the case because his belief in rehabilitation influenced his decision to try O’Brien as a juvenile. O’Brien was eventually tried as an adult and sentenced to life imprisonment, and in the heat immediately following the brutal murder, the state legislature passed laws demanding adult justice for teenagers charged with any of seven violent crimes.

“Like building more graveyards”

Crime, violence and drugs are very real problems. But will more ruthless police and courts, longer sentences and more prisons make our communities more peaceful? One prison reform activist says that “building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease.”

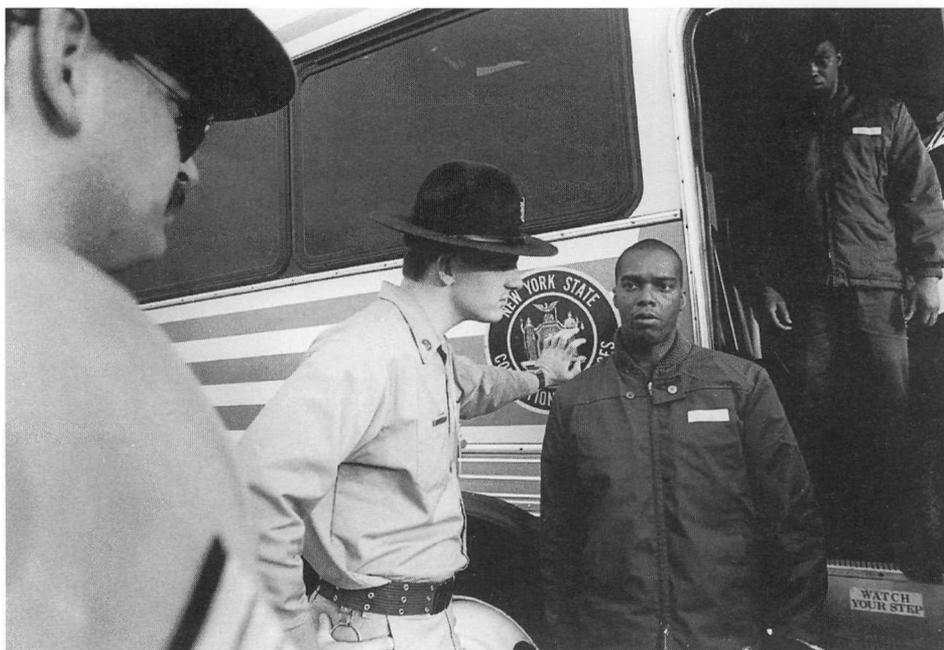
In a recent speech, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark suggested that we ought to tear down all the prisons. Prisons don’t protect the public or rehabilitate inmates. They reduce chances for future employment, and breed dependency, despair and mental illness. If anything, they foster crime. “The criminal justice system is the worst attempt to address these problems we could possibly devise,” says Malcolm Young, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project. “It does nothing but breed resentment on the part of the

“Treatment does work. Education, where it has been tried, has made a huge difference.” Increasingly, prisons offer neither.

Who are the prisons for?

If prisons have failed to serve their stated functions, perhaps we need to look at some of the unstated functions prisons serve. Studies show that 90 percent of adult Americans have committed a crime punishable by incarceration. Who ends up behind bars?

Nationwide, if your skin is black you are nine times more likely to end up in



Prison inmates arriving at a shock camp meet their drill instructors.

Andrew Lichtenstein, Impact Visuals

offender.”

“We should send offenders to prison as punishment, not for punishment,” says Charles Sullivan, founder and executive director of national CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants). Sullivan, whose organization has programs in most states — many run by recovering drug addicts — points out that drug-related convictions account for much of the increase in incarceration. He says we ought to view drug abuse as a health problem, and address it accordingly.

prison. In 10 states, all in the North, blacks are more than 15 times more likely to be locked away. Blacks serve sentences 20 percent longer than whites convicted of similar crimes. By reducing the sentences given blacks to create parity with those given whites, the federal prison system alone could free up three thousand beds and close six prisons.

Increasingly, prisons serve as warehouses for people with no place in the economic order — the poor and unemployed. Over half of prisoners are serving

time for economically motivated crimes — burglary, larceny or theft. Over half were unemployed at the time of arrest. Seventy-two percent of prison inmates never finished high school. Pennsylvania inmate Donny Unger writes, “Either education and wealth are two of the strongest fortifications against the commission of crime, or there is a different measure of justice for the rich and the poor, white and black, the educated and the unlearned.” Or maybe he’s right on both counts.

Historically, prisons have been used to suppress dissent. Today, leaders of the Puerto Rico independence movement, Black Panthers, and American Indian Movement are serving unprecedented sentences for politically motivated crimes. Every new prison built adds to a growing apparatus for repression, and contingency plans for mass detention are already in place. An executive order signed by President George Bush in 1989 authorized the

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to build 43 “internment camps” with a capacity of 35,000 to 45,000 prisoners each, for use in the event of “national disaster, social unrest, insurrection, or national financial crisis.”

Toward alternatives

For investors in C.C.A. stocks, and politicians who profit politically from crime (and fiscally, if they own C.C.A. stock or court the industry’s powerful lobby), high recidivism rates are a positive indicator. Rehabilitation is hardly a driving concern. “The system won’t improve until citizens see it as their duty to get involved,” insists William DiMascio.

Vermont is one of the first states to build such an approach into its criminal justice system. There, councils of community members determine community service and restitution payments by non-violent offenders.

There have been minor victories in

other corners. Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota successfully added an amendment to a federal crime-fighting bill that will allow states to use money for treatment of mentally ill inmates rather than for prison construction. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously this year to apply the Americans with Disabilities Act to prisoners. In Oklahoma, the League of Women Voters sponsored a study circle which played a key role in implementing major legislative reform.

Richard Dieter, director of the Death Penalty Information Center, notes a heightening of public awareness. He says, “Like never before, people are aware of the fact that the death penalty isn’t a deterrent, that it’s costly, that mistakes are made, and that it isn’t applied justly or fairly.” All of which can be said of imprisonment as well.

We are capable of a justice more fair and compassionate than this. **TW**

No sanctuary

Jerome Bowden was a clinically retarded African American man who had grown up in Muscogee County, Ga., where his mother worked as a maid for the county sheriff. Jerome and his sister grew up eating surplus commodity food because his mother was not paid a living wage. His whole life was something of a death row even before he got to prison. There he remained for a number of years before he was executed in June of 1986.

Jerome had a simple, childlike approach to life. And the way he saw what was going on inside the prison was always so basic that I often learned from him. I loved the time he told us about the Bible Study they were having in his cell block on the Book of Revelation.

Jerome wanted to understand Revelation so badly that he kept going to the other guys saying, “Look, can’t you just break this down for me?” Finally, one of his friends drew a chart of Revelation. I wish I could have seen that chart because I would like to see just exactly how the Book of Revelation was reduced to a chart and explained to Jerome.

We went to see Jerome one day, and he was dying laughing. He told us how the guards had come into the cell block for a shakedown. They threw his stuff all over the floor and looked for contraband and weapons. One guard came across Jerome’s chart of Revelation. He was convinced that it was an escape plan! So Jerome’s chart was confiscated and taken straightaway to the Warden’s office, where numerous prison bureaucrats put their heads together over it. They tried to figure out how Jerome Bowden was going to escape from death row with this

chart. And Jerome couldn’t stop laughing. But he never got his chart back.

When Jerome’s execution date was set, the Georgia Association for Retarded Citizens took his case and began to advocate for him. A stay of execution was won that lasted for several days. During that time the Board of Pardons and Paroles sent in an Emory University psychologist to study Jerome and determine just how retarded he was. The conclusion drawn by this eminent psychologist was that Jerome Bowden was retarded, but not quite retarded enough to be spared. What an ironic twist that the test the psychologist used was to ask Jerome to define the word “sanctuary.” Jerome said, “A place to go and be safe.” Sanctuary — because he knew the word, Jerome died.

—Murphy Davis is a member of the Open Door community in Atlanta, Ga.

Voluntary Service and Action

The Commission on Voluntary Service and Action (CVSA) has been promoting independent volunteer action since the aftermath of World War II. At that time, CVSA produced a pamphlet called *Invest Your Summer*, which listed the locations and contact people operating various independent non-government, all-volunteer-run relief and reconstruction centers.

CVSA has long recognized and promoted the special role of independent, full-time volunteers' efforts in addressing the needs of the world's communities. Its continued role and vision has been to protect the fundamental right of individuals to participate in voluntary service activities outside of the domain of corporate and government controls. The Commission remains the only non-government, ecumenically based organization in North America advancing voluntary service as a vocation.

Copies of *Invest Yourself*, which lists over 200 organizations offering volunteer opportunities, are available from CVSA, PO Box 117, New York, NY 10009. The suggested donation is \$8 per guide, \$3 for postage and handling.

Plowshares in jail

On May 17, 1998, the 30th anniversary of the Catonsville Nine protest, five peace activists beat swords into plowshares at an air show outside Washington, D.C. Calling themselves the Gods of Metal Plowshares, Carol Gilbert and Ardeth Platte, from Baltimore's Jonah House, Frank Cordaro from Des Moines, Iowa, Larry Morlan, from Bloomington, Ill., and Kathy Shields Boylan, from Washington, D.C.'s Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, hammered and poured blood on a B-52 bomber during the Department of Defense Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Prince George's County, Md.

After the Gods of Metal Plowshares hammered, leafletted, prayed and threw their own blood, military and civilian police placed the five religious activists under arrest. Their trial before Federal Judge

Alexander Williams, Jr., began on September 22 with the defendants facing a misdemeanor count of willful injury to government property, less than \$1,000 damage, which carries a possible sentence of one year in jail.

Francis Boyle, a professor of International Law at the University of Illinois College of Law at Urbana-Champaign, was the final witness for the defense. Boyle said that the defendants had acted without malice, in the belief that the B-52 bomber, because its purpose is mass extermination, violates various international treaties, including the rules of war.

In reaching his decision to find the five defendants guilty, Judge Williams disregarded Boyle's testimony. In response, the defendants refused to further cooperate with the court. They were then taken into custody.

— Max Obuszewski,
Jonah House

Nuclear waste storage

According to Honor the Earth, every proposal to store high level nuclear waste in North America targets Native lands. The Skull Valley Goshute community of Utah is the target of a private storage initiative, while the Western Shoshone of Nevada struggle to prevent their sacred Yucca Mountain from becoming the nation's radioactive dump. Canada is pushing to store waste on two small, isolated reserves — one of which has just received running water from the government.

Honor the Earth has developed an ongoing Nuclear Waste Initiative to resist the radioactive contamination of Native lands, and to address the imbalance of power between politically and materially impoverished Native communities and the energy interests of industrial society.

To receive their newsletter, contact Honor the Earth, PO Box 75423, St. Paul, MN 55175; 612-721-1918; <HONOREARTH@EARTHLINK.NET>; <WWW.HONOREARTH.COM>.

Colleges ranked for gay acceptance

The Princeton Review has released the 1999 edition of its annual "The Best 311 Colleges," based on a survey of 56,000 students' assessments of their own schools. One of the 62 rankings assesses which colleges are most and least accepting of gays and lesbians on campus.

The top 10 list in order: 1) Saint John's College, Sante Fe, N.M.; 2) Cooper Union, N.Y.; 3) Warren Wilson College, Asheville, N.C.; 4) Marlboro College, Marlboro, Vt.; 5) Saint John's College, Annapolis, Md.; 6) Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass; 7) Eastman School of Music, N.Y.; 8) Hendrix College, Conway, Ark.; 9) College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine; 10) Boston Conservatory, Boston, Mass.

The superconformist list entitled "Alternative lifestyles not an alternative" is: 1) Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind.; 2) Morehouse College, Atlanta, Ga.; 3) Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.; 4) University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I.; 5) Westminster College, Wilmington, Penn.; 6) University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn.; 7) Baylor University, Waco, Tex.; 8) Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; 9) Hamilton College, Clinton, N.Y.; 10) Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.

In 1996, New York University Press issued "The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Students' Guide to Colleges, Universities and Graduate Schools," based on a survey of lesbian and gay students on 1,100 campuses. Some of its top picks were Oberlin College (Ohio), Reed College (Ore.) and Johns Hopkins University (Md.), while some of its lowest ranked choices were Dartmouth College (N.H.), University of Colorado (Boulder) and Boston University.

short takes

Captive labor: jobs without justice

by Jane Slaughter

Start talking about “prison labor,” and people tend to fall into two categories. One is appalled at the exploitation implied: workers locked up, overseen by guards, with no say in their wages, conditions, or anything else. But the other group sees a chance to “make prisons pay” and to get tough on crime. Back in the 1970s, Chief Justice Warren Burger called for turning prisons into “factories with fences.” Today, Burger’s words are coming true, with consequences that may be as serious for workers on the outside as for those who labor behind bars.

The number of prisoners who work for private, profit-making companies or state-controlled industries—around 80,000—is still relatively small compared to the skyrocketing prison population.

But the numbers are growing fast, urged along by advocates in government and by companies who see prison labor as a closer-to-home alternative to production in Asia and Mexico.

“It’s about time we stopped being ashamed of our resources and began putting them to work,” says Rep. Stephen Matthew (R-AZ), chair of a Congressional committee studying prison labor. Matthew says his goal is to have half of all prisoners holding down inside jobs by the year 2000.

Consider these trends:

- a phenomenal increase in the number of people behind bars—1.9 million

Jane Slaughter is a Detroit-based labor writer. Cartoonist **Kirk Anderson** lives in St. Paul, Minn.

today, driving towards one percent of the total population—propelled by the lock ’em up mentality prevalent in legislatures;

A publication from the Department of Justice spells it out: “Inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a cost-effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries.”

- fewer and fewer good jobs available, as the supposedly “booming” economy creates mostly low-wage or temporary or part-time jobs (or all three);
- welfare recipients forced into low-paid jobs in competition with other working-class people, under the heading of “welfare reform.”

Then recall the rhetoric that conservatives use to describe members of what they call “the underclass”—“welfare queens” sucking up the tax dollars of hard-working citizens, criminals watching TV in jail, likewise on the tax dollars of those same law-abiding citizens. Given all this, it’s not hard to believe that policy makers have in mind a two-pronged “so-

lution” to the perceived problem of the underclass: low-paid, poverty-sustaining jobs for the women, even lower-paid jobs in jail for the men. As one advocate mused in an Internet posting, “[Prison] labor is the carpet under which can be swept those who fall out the bottom of the system, and it’s a profit center as well! ... It seems to be the only government-sponsored program that ‘deals with’ inner-city unemployment.”

Slave labor?

In a collection of essays by prisoners, *The Celling of America*, prisoner Paul Wright, co-editor of *Prison Legal News*, notes that Americans mistakenly believe that slavery was ended by the Thirteenth Amendment. In truth, Wright points out, “slavery and involuntary servitude” were abolished, in the words of the Constitution, “except as punishment for crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” After the Civil War, it was common for newly freed slaves to be “duly convicted,” sent to jail, and then leased out to private employers.

In the 1930s, spurred by Depression unemployment, Congress forbade the interstate transport of prison-made goods made for less than minimum wage, effectively shutting down the private use of prison labor. It was today’s prison-building binge that once again sent lawmakers looking for ways to make money from convicts’ work. In 1979, Congress created a program to help bring private companies into prisons. From 1980 to 1994, sales by prison industries, private and state-run, rose from \$392 million to \$1.31 billion, as the number of federal and state prisoners working in prison industries jumped by 358 percent. Some industry officials estimate that by 2000 prison industries’ sales will hit \$8.9 billion.

Required to work

Some prisoner activists, such as Paul Wright, call prison work “slave labor,” arguing that it is not truly voluntary.

According to the AFL-CIO, 21 states have passed laws requiring prisoners to work, and federal prisoners are required to work as well. Just as important, taking a job can reduce your sentence, often on a day worked per day served basis, and not taking one can subject you to penalties that lengthen your sentence.

Even at the pitifully low wages paid, prisoners take jobs for the money. Alice Lynd, co-founder of a prisoners' advocacy group called Prison Forum in Youngstown, Ohio, explains, "I have a friend who gets \$17 a month for tutoring. People working for Ohio Penal Industries get as much as \$45 a month. It creates a class system within the prison as to who's got money for the commissary and who hasn't." One prisoner doing data entry at San Quentin said, "The food here sucks and a can of tuna fish costs 95 cents in the commissary, so I am really glad to have this job."

Courts have ruled that the Fair Labor Standards Act, which mandates the minimum wage for free labor, does not apply to government-employed prisoners. Federal UNICOR inmates are paid between 23 cents and \$1.15 per hour, and up to 50 percent of that may be deducted. Private companies in prison are required to pay the minimum wage. Whatever the nominal wage, however, prisoners see only a small portion of it. Prison officials make deductions for room and board, taxes, family support, victim restitution, and savings for release. A Unibase employee

at Lebanon Correctional Institution in Ohio, for example, makes 47 cents an hour for data entry, and a sewing machine operator at Soledad in California makes 45 cents.

If prisoners have incentives to take prison jobs, private companies have equally strong motivation to locate behind bars. A publication from the Department of Justice spells it out: "Inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a

On top of these incentives, the government often provides handsome subsidies to entrepreneurs, such as leasing them space at very low rates or subsidies to buy equipment. An ad from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections asks business owners, "Can't Find Workers? A Willing Workforce Waits."

Perhaps the most bizarre rationale for prison labor is that it keeps jobs in the U.S. "We can put a Made-in-the-U.S.A. label on our product," one executive told

a Justice Department researcher. Companies argue that prison jobs would otherwise be done by workers in Sri Lanka or El Salvador. The president of multinational Unibase, with workers inside three Ohio prisons, says that keeping work in the state is part of his "sales pitch."

It's easy to imagine a scenario in which a worker loses his job, com-

mits a crime out of desperation, and then ends up working for his former company in jail. But at least he's got the job, not the foreign competition!

Rehabilitation?

Occasionally an advocate of prison labor will claim it's good for prisoners (as opposed to state or private coffers). The idea is that prison jobs teach work habits to those who've seldom held a steady job. One study, for example, showed that inmates employed by Badger State Industries in Wisconsin had a 15 percent lower recidivism rate than other inmates.

But others doubt that prison work will help prisoners once they return to society.



cost-effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries."

Company executives delight that prisoner-workers never get stuck in traffic (though they are subject to periodic prison-wide lockdowns). Nor do they receive benefits or vacations. And they fit well with companies' focus on "flexibility"—available when needed for surges in demand, returned to their cells, with no unemployment pay, when the market sags. Prisoners can be fired for any or no reason, including back-talk, and they are not allowed to unionize, much less to strike.

For one thing, prison employers tend to cherry-pick the “best” prisoners, those with work histories and good records. Many managers set up the hiring scene as much as possible like private-sector ventures, with applications and interviews. So those hired are those most likely to make it on the outside in any case.

Second, most prison jobs are specifically designed not to require marketable skills. The Justice Department passes along the advice of a manager at a South Carolina firm: “Keep it simple—put the least complex sewing jobs you have inside the prison.” Alice Lynd points out, “Sewing blue jeans isn’t done outside prisons, it’s done overseas. When they

get out they won’t be able to run down to a plant and get a job.”

Third, although punching a behind-bars time clock is said to teach a “work ethic,” the stultifying nature of the low-skill job could also carry the lesson that work is something to be avoided at all costs.

Competition

With the American workforce already battered by downsizing, privatization, contracting out, and the dislocation of jobs to overseas factories, workers’ organizations are becoming alarmed by the rapid growth of prison work. “Prison labor,” says the AFL-CIO, “is being used today to perform work in both the private

and public sectors ordinarily done by free workers.”

Under the 1979 Prison Industries Enhancement law, private companies who want to operate in jail must pay the “prevailing wage.” They must consult with and win approval from union leaders in the area; their industry must be one with no local unemployment; and the local labor market should not be affected.

But as the examples below show, these rules are apparently ignored:

- In Arizona, a hog slaughtering plant closed down, costing union workers their jobs. The plant then reopened as a joint venture between the Department of Corrections and the state’s Pork Producers Association.
 - In Wisconsin, Fabry Glove & Mitten cut wages and slashed outside jobs by 40 percent after hiring inmates at the Green Bay Correctional Institution.
 - In Utah, asbestos removal companies say that prison labor has virtually driven them out of business. “We find it ironic that they are putting an industry out of business that they are purportedly training people to work in,” said a spokesperson.
 - Companies in the government-supply business say that UNICOR’s rapid expansion has cost 2,000 jobs in furniture-making since the late 1980s.
 - A private prison run by Wackenhut in Lockhart, Texas, houses a company called LTI which assembles circuit boards for IBM and Texas Instruments. Wackenhut built LTI a brand-new facility (using prisoner labor) and charges the company a rent of \$1 per year. To top it off, LTI gets a tax abatement from the city.
- But before this cozy arrangement, LTI operated a circuit board plant in nearby Austin, employing 150 workers. The company laid them all off and moved its equipment to Lockhart.
- DPAS, a literature assembly firm,

Look for the prison label

Some examples of prison labor for private profit:

- Picking pineapples and processing macadamia nuts for Hawaiian Tropical Products (replacing workers imported from Micronesia and Mexico).
- Sewing lingerie for Victoria’s Secret (South Carolina).
- Taking plane reservations for TWA (California Youth Authority).
- Sewing blue jeans under the “Prison Blues” label (Oregon). Shirts with the slogan “Made on the Inside to be Worn on the Outside” or “Sentenced to Life on Earth” sell for \$27 each.
- Data entry for Unibase (Ohio).
- Building a nuclear power station (South Carolina).
- Sewing graduation caps and gowns (South Carolina).
- Making windshield wiper parts (Ohio).
- Telemarketing for Congressional candidate Rep. Jack Metcalf.
- Sewing Eddie Bauer clothing (Washington).

- Building electronic menu boards for McDonald’s (Oregon).
- Packaging Windows ’95 and Microsoft Office software in Washington (ended after exposure in media).
- Stocking shelves for Toys ‘R Us in Illinois (ended when exposed).
- Packaging for Starbucks (Washington).
- Stuffing envelopes for US West (Washington).

More numerous are jobs in state-owned or federal prison factories. Jailed workers in Ohio, for example, make furniture, cleaning products, street signs, U.S. flags, boxes, clothing and shoes. They also do asbestos abatement, data entry, auto repair, printing and drafting, and furniture refinishing.

Federal prisoners build a wide range of goods, ranging from clothing and furniture to war materials, including missile cables and bomb parts. The federal government’s UNICOR is the largest single employer of prisoners.

closed its facility in Tecate, Mexico, in favor of San Quentin.

Prevention, not bogus cures

Youngstown, Ohio, where Alice Lynd lives and works, was devastated by the steel mill closings of the 1980s. She helped found the Prison Forum group after Youngstown officials hailed the construction of a new "Supermax" prison there as a job-creation coup. Prison Forum has drawn up a platform on prison labor that would protect both imprisoned workers and those outside the walls. Besides banning the displacement of outside jobs, it would give prison workers the right to unionize and strike, or, at the very least, to report their grievances to an outside labor organization to advocate on their behalf.

Lynd is a Quaker whose long-time activism has ranged from union support to draft counseling during the Vietnam war. Her work with prisoners, she believes, is "consistent with traditional

Quaker concerns; it has roots that go way back." Prison Forum includes a retired schoolteacher, professors of criminal jus-

It's easy to imagine a scenario in which a worker loses his job, commits a crime out of desperation, and then ends up working for his former company in jail. But at least he's got the job, not the foreign competition!

tice and English literature, two steelworkers and the religious education director of a Unitarian church.

As an attorney, Lynd is able to work directly with prisoners while also taking education into the community. "People tend to think of criminals as people who

are like barbarians," she says, "people who are outside the society. But most of them are going to return to society, and they may have a more difficult time than they had before to reestablish themselves in a constructive mode, rather than go from bad to worse." She wants to "assist by giving people hope, help them figure out how their future can amount to anything, how they will make it on the outside."

Unfortunately, she doesn't see prison jobs, in their current form, as a big part of the solution. "Some major plants will hire ex-convicts," she says, "but there are an awful lot of occupations where they're not going to.

"We need to do much more at the prevention end. Increasingly repressive prisons and longer terms are not meeting society's needs. Jobs, education, assistance to get off drugs are being short-changed to try to deal with it at the wrong end of the problem." **TW**

BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of The Witness contain articles which may relate directly to The Prison-Industrial Complex, or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- Economic justice (5/94)
- Economies of sin (3/95)
- Immigration: the flight into America (12/97)
- In need of a labor movement (9/96)
- Unmasking the death penalty (9/97)
- Welfare 'reform' and poverty in the 1990s (3/98)

Other available back issues:

- Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)
- Alternative ways of doing church (8-9/94)
- American Faces of Islam (5/96)
- Body wisdom (5/95)
- Can Christians learn the earth's song? (10/98)
- The Christian Right (10/96)
- Christians and animal rights (10/93)
- The communion of saints (11/93)
- Disabilities (6/94)
- The Episcopal Church in conflict (5/98)
- Fasting in Babylon (12/96)
- Glamour (11/94)

- Godly sex (5/93)
- Holy matrimony (12/95)
- Hospitals: quality, access and spirit (6/96)
- In defense of creation (6/93)
- International youth in crisis (7-8/93)
- The Left (3/94)
- The New Party (11/95)
- Northern Ireland: winds of peace (11/97)
- Ordination: multi-cultural priesthood (5/92)
- Perspectives on Aging (1-2/93)
- Resisting sprawl (10-95)
- Resurrecting land (4/95)
- Silence (1-2/96)
- Staying in my denomination (10/94)
- Trickster spirit: a paradigm for social action? (7-8/98)
- What to do with what you don't believe (4/98)
- When the church engages rage (12/92)
- Who is mentoring today's young adults? (9/98)
- Women's spirituality (7/94)

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Bearing witness across the divide

by Joe Summers

*And she asked, "Can you describe this?"
And I said, I could.*

*And a smile appeared where her face had
once been.*

— from a poem by Ann Akhmatova
about an exchange with a woman in
one of Stalin's concentration camps

When my congregation, The Church of the Incarnation, was established its members decided to focus on prison ministry. It seemed to connect our concerns with such evils as racism and sexism and the way the poor are treated. It also seemed a way to root ourselves in our area, as the institutions which weren't wanted elsewhere — including two jails and two prisons — were put in our rural township.

When I was hired by the church, I felt some foreboding that this was the congregation's major form of outreach, not only because I suffered from claustrophobia but also because I didn't understand why it was so important. After 11 years of working in Michigan's prisons, it is clear to me that the issue of incarceration is one of the most central issues of our time.

Simply entering a prison makes one aware of the barrage of propaganda that we are subjected to daily which leads us to understand crime as a problem of evil people. Again and again I have seen the enormous relief which sweeps over people

Joe Summers is co-pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Pittsfield Township, Mich. The work of **Nancy Jean King**, an inmate at the Florence Crane Correctional Facility in Coldwater, Mich., was featured in a Prison Arts Project exhibit in Ann Arbor, Mich.

after their first extensive visit to a prison, as they realize the prison is filled not with demons but with people, with all the dreams, aspirations, good and twisted intentions, wholeness and brokenness that you find among people throughout our society.

*It is worth noting that one of
the new religions that has
emerged and spread quickly
within Michigan's prisons
looks to Nat Turner as its
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interracial war.*

Encountering the poor

There are some middle- and upper-class people in our prisons, but overwhelmingly you encounter the poor. Having previously worked in a shelter for the homeless, I found it to be exactly the same population, with almost the same percentage of mentally ill folks. Their problems are manifold, but they are not the creatures who inhabit films like *Silence of the Lambs*. Doing prison work leaves one much less afraid of the poor.

In a society that looks increasingly like South Africa under apartheid, prison outreach allows middle-class people to reach across the growing divide between the poor and the affluent. It allows us to experience the devastation which goes hand in hand with the new society we are creating, as seen from the perspective of those for whom this society has no place.

In trying to accurately bear witness to

the reality of our prisons and what they are doing to people, one is forced to either use a language that sounds hyperbolic or use statistics that seem to deny the human character of the tragedy which is occurring. So many of those in our prisons seem to have been programmed by life experiences for destruction. The prison system almost guarantees this fate, as 80 percent of those who are released from prison are re-arrested within something like five years.

Incarceration has emerged as a catch-all solution to a wide variety of social problems. A study of Michigan's highest-security women's facility found that the majority of women were there for multiple offenses of such crimes as shoplifting, prostitution, and bad check writing. The vast majority of prisoners have drug and alcohol problems. Most enter lacking high school educations. Most have been victims of domestic violence.

One of the horrors of prison work is to discover that a large proportion of the deinstitutionalized mentally ill are now in our prisons. A federally mandated study of Michigan's prisons done in 1987 found that 19.7 percent of the prison population was severely psychiatrically impaired and 47.5% moderately impaired.

Racism and alienation

Doing prison outreach also puts you directly in touch with the racist reality of life in the U.S. today. There is the racism of sentencing laws which penalize the poor 100 times more severely for the form of cocaine they use (crack) than the form normally used by the middle-class and wealthy, even though scientists have testified there is no fundamental difference between them.

There is the racism of a criminal justice system which only has mercy on those who can afford expensive lawyers. The rate of incarceration of African Americans is several times higher than the rate of incarceration of blacks under

apartheid in South Africa. Today, more black men aged 20-29 are in prison than in college. (This is even more outrageous when one realizes they could all be sent to the best universities for less money.) Nationally, more than 25 percent of black men are under some form of criminal justice control at any given time. One out of four black men will go to prison in his lifetime — and this does not include jail, parole, or probation.

A number of the black members of our congregation had to quit prison outreach, feeling it was simply too painful to see the destruction of African-American youth. To have others take control of your body and its most basic functions leads to a level of alienation and anger which is overpowering. That a society with a legacy of slavery could so quickly move towards acting this way towards so many of

the men who are the descendants of slaves is unconscionable. What it may mean for future interracial conflict cannot be underestimated. It is worth noting that one of the new religions that has emerged and spread quickly within Michigan's prisons looks to Nat Turner as its saint and looks forward to the day of judgment in terms of interracial war.

Fostering dependency

Prisoners tend to be people suffering from one form or another of dependency prob-

lems — yet they are put in a context which forces them into total dependency and denies them almost any grounds for building up a new sense of self. When we have tried to set up projects such as making crafts to raise funds for domestic violence shelters, they have been vetoed again and again for “security reasons.” Having been denied the opportunity,

then those who were incarcerated.

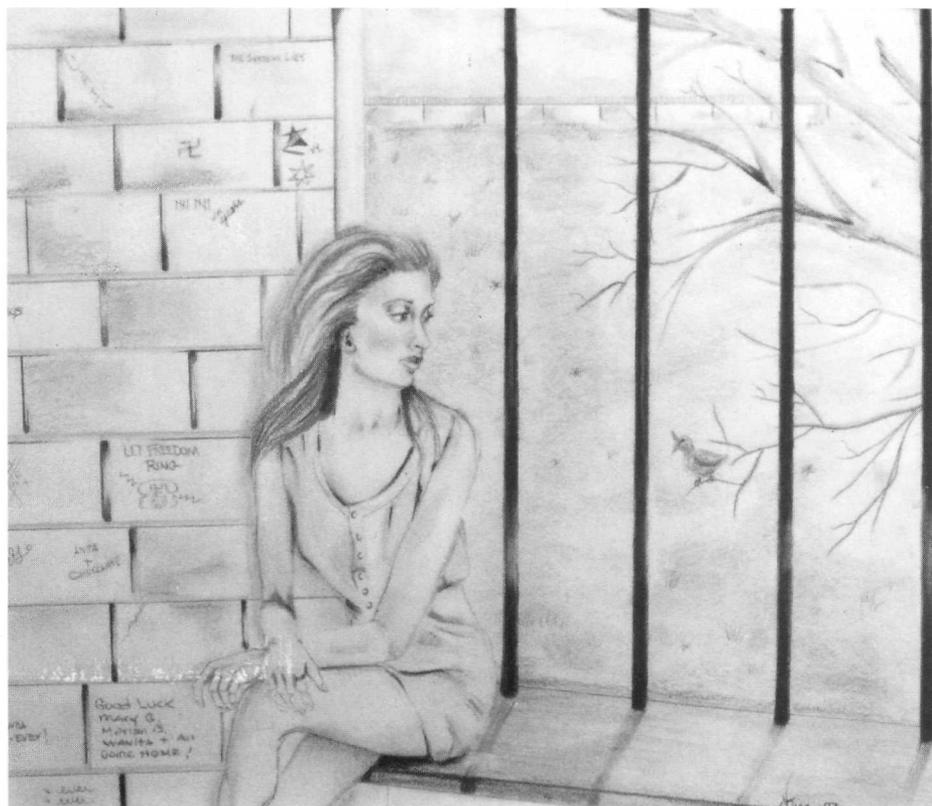
Michigan vs. Minnesota

At the same time that Michigan set about constructing 30 new prisons for a cost of one billion dollars, Minnesota passed a community corrections act. The act was designed to divert one half of the population that was going into prison into community programs. These programs address a variety of things needed to help participants become successful members of society — e.g. permanent housing, a job, education or job training and drug and/or alcohol counseling. They put millions of dollars formerly going out of communities back into communities. Though the programs have not been magical, most participants have about a 30 percent recidivism rate — less than half the rate for those who have been incarcerated.

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Impact on prison employees

For decades, prisons have been Michigan's largest growth industry. Prisons have been held up as political plums for communities that have suffered auto industry cutbacks. But the alienation and dehumanization which occurs in prisons also affects the thousands of people now employed by the prison system. A system that no longer believes in rehabilitation makes its employees instruments of punishment. One hears widespread stories of the personal and domestic unhappiness of many of the guards. In a system



The beauty out there by Nancy Jean King

sometimes for many years, to make the simplest of decisions in day-to-day life, the incarcerated are then thrust back into society and told they must immediately find jobs and housing and stay straight. It's no wonder few can make the transition. The Rand Corporation did a study comparing felons who had committed similar crimes, some of whom were incarcerated, while others were simply let off. It was found that those who had been let off were less likely to be re-arrested

that has very little direct accountability to the public and which is accountable to the legislature only for security problems, it is easy for people to lose their perspective. I remember hearing in our Bible study that women in the prison were being handcuffed, spread-eagled and naked, to stone slabs when they acted up. The administration clearly felt maligned when they were criticized for this, for they had even gone to the trouble to keep video cameras on the women to make sure no one abused them.

If the public could get video footage of the solitary confinement units, which often house prisoners covered with feces, one suspects the outrage over the treatment of the mentally ill would quickly force changes. This is not likely to happen any time soon, for cameras are not allowed in most prisons — again, for security reasons. Our governor is currently even blocking a United Nations human rights inspector from visiting Michigan's prisoners. No doubt, she also poses a security threat.

Temptations

To be a Christian in the context of such great evil is to be prey to a number of temptations.

The individuals being ground up by this system desperately want you to perform some magic which will deliver them from their hell. Many offer it: "Pray and God will get you out of prison."

The majority of Christians in most of the prisons I work in have bought into a Christianity that says that God can and will act to deliver you from prison apart from any human agency — if you just have enough faith. Stories abound of miracles: cures of the ailments so many suffer, abusive guards who fall dead, prisoners who keep the faith and get out.

In the context of such desperation, one can bask in simply being so needed and so valued. A large percentage of prisoners get very few visitors. Your presence is bread for them.

Conversions are ample. It's easy to feel that in trying to rescue as many individuals as possible you are doing all

that can be asked of you. Of the thousands of religious volunteers who come into Michigan's prisons each month, very few participate in any kind of lobbying to change the system that is putting people there.

Finally, in the face of such apocalyptic evil one can submit to the spirit of the apocalypse and come to feel that nothing you can do can really make any difference. The forces you encounter can seem too large and too inhuman to be held accountable. At conferences on the corrections system, you will encounter some who can only recite litanies of the terrible evils they have confronted, but whose litanies only end up paying homage to the beast, as they have lost any ability to believe in their power or the power of others to confront it.

Those of us fighting to resist these temptations are not left with much. We do what we can and try to bear witness, so that when the time comes — when minds and hearts become open — we can testify and be heard, to stop the systematic destruction of our sisters and brothers. **TW**

Prison theater

An English professor at the University of Michigan has found theater to be one means of bridging the gap between prisoners and those on the outside. Buzz Alexander teaches two theater workshop courses that take students inside Michigan prisons to work with inmates.

Based on the educational theories of Paolo Freire and the theater experiments of Augusto Boal and Ross Kidd, Alexander's approach is based on "respect for people and refusal to impose one's own perspectives and style," he explains. "There is a sense that people can address their own issues creatively, and do best when they make their own decisions. We bring in some tools and

create a space where this can happen."

For prisoners, "theater offers a chance to work with other people, to invent, to perform, to respect their own lives and stories as significant," Alexander says. For students, the experience "is often transformative. They go to a place none of them have been, which has been stereotyped and mythologized, where their friends and family are afraid they will get assaulted or killed, and they find genuine, friendly, warm, creative human beings. They also get a look at who's there, and see the high percentage of blacks and minorities."

In the workshops, participants work collectively to improvise theater pro-

ductions.

"The basic theme in a huge percentage of plays is the re-establishment of family relationships and community building," Alexander says. "There have been a number of plays about what happens when you get out of prison. Some have been autobiographical, and deal with runaways, how to get out of a gang, and neighborhood stories. A lot of prisoners have younger brothers, or children, and they are concerned about them."

The communal work builds relationships "that continue out in the yard," Alexander says. Many participants return for subsequent workshops, and one women's facility has its own theater troupe, "Sisters Within."

— *Marianne Arbogast*

Restorative justice: making things right

by Duane Ruth-Heffelbower

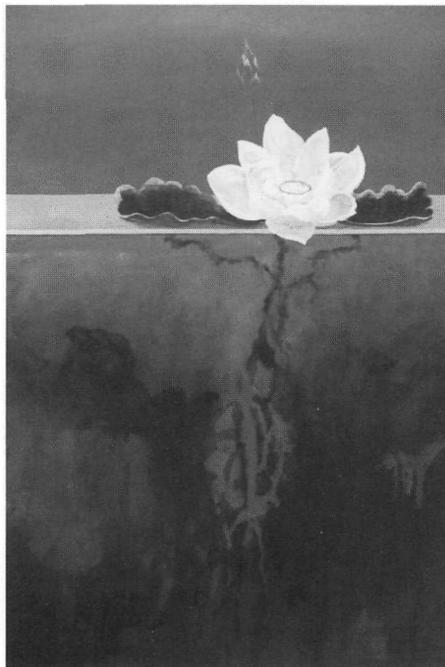
I recently heard a woman who survived a home invasion robbery, where her husband was killed and her daughter raped, muse about the term “criminal justice system.” “Shouldn’t it be ‘victim justice system’?” she asked.

The truth is that our U.S. criminal justice system is focused on providing procedural due process for those accused of crime. It puts few resources toward those harmed by the crime, with some notable exceptions. This is what I and others call a “retributive justice system.” It asks whether a law was broken, who did it, and what measured dose of pain they deserve in consequence. Howard Zehr suggests that a retributive justice system makes certain assumptions:

- Crime is a violation of law.
- The state is the victim.
- The victim-offender relationship does not matter.
- The debt is paid by “taking punishment.”
- The balance is righted by punishing the offender.
- Justice is found in an adversarial process following rules.

Which one of us would feel, as a victim of crime, that we had received

justice from such a process? My suspicion is that we resonate better with the assumptions of restorative justice as described by Zehr:



Lotus by Anthony James

- Crime is a violation of people and relationships.
- Justice should identify needs and obligations and make things right.
- Justice encourages dialogue and agreement, giving victims and offenders central roles.
- Justice is tested by the extent to which responsibilities are assumed, needs met and healing encouraged.

Restorative justice is a new old thing. Village cultures have always had justice systems that looked like the restorative system described above. If you kill my

pig, you owe me a pig plus something. The Bible has a lot to say on the subject. We may remember an eye for an eye, but Deuteronomy goes into great detail on the subject of righting wrongs by payment of damages or the doing of helpful acts. The standard measure of justice throughout human history has been compensation for losses and the righting of relationships. Village cultures can’t afford the luxury of locking someone up, which means supporting them and their family. The direct cost of our system is lost in the huge national economic structure. Howard Zehr chronicles the fairly recent creation of the retributive justice system in his book, *Changing Lenses*. It dates back only to the centralization of power by English kings, but has been exported throughout the world by European empires.

Restorative justice is not a program or a process, but a way of understanding justice. All justice processes can be placed on a continuum with retributive at one end and restorative at the other. The idea of restorative justice is to work at moving all processes in the restorative direction.

Ron Claassen of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies of Fresno Pacific University has published a set of Principles of Restorative Justice, which have been adopted by the United Nations Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations Working Party on Restorative Justice as a starting point for their work. By applying these principles to any justice practice, it is possible to rate the practice as more restorative or more retributive. The basic question is whether the particular practice tends to make victims whole while restoring the offender as a productive member of the community. The closer a practice comes to this ideal, the more restorative it is.

Victim offender reconciliation

What do some more restorative practices look like? A good example is Victim

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower is Associate Director of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies of Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, Calif.; <duanerh@fresno.edu>. The work of artists **Anthony James** and **Mark Killingsworth**, both inmates in Michigan prisons, have been featured in the Prison Arts Project exhibition in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Offender Reconciliation Program. VORP has a simple premise: Crime creates obligations which must be voluntarily acknowledged by the offender, a plan for making things as right as possible needs to be developed by the victim and offender working together, and future intentions have to be made clear. While there is a range of practices within the VORP movement, each program provides a trained mediator who brings the victim and offender together to work out a plan. Here in Fresno with VORP of the Central Valley, most cases are handled by trained volunteer community mediators, most of whom are members of churches. The rest are done by VORP staff.

We have found through experience that the best way to help victims heal is to have offenders acknowledge their wrongs (confession), do what they can to make things right (atonement, which is always a combination of restitution and grace),

Restorative justice websites

The principles of restorative justice developed by Ron Claasen are available at <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs/rjprinc.html>. A more complete edition with explanations of each principle is available at <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs/rjprinc2.html>.

Information on the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program can be found at <http://vorp.org>.

The article "What is forgiveness?" by Ron Claasen, which describes the peacemaking model developed at the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies, is available at <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs/restj2.html>.

and be clear about their future intentions toward the victim (repentance). As agreements are made and kept, trust and healing grow.

Fresno VORP has handled more than 7,000 cases since a small beginning in 1982. One case I worked with involved the theft of a new car from a theater parking lot. The owners of the car had gone to a dinner theater to celebrate their anniversary. Since it was a new car, and they were concerned about it being stolen, they parked right under a light in the parking lot. When they returned, the car was gone. They called police, and finally went home in a cab several hours later.

Unlike most stolen car stories, this car was found by police with the thief in it. He was a teenager with no prior record. I received the case as a community volunteer, after the offender admitted the charge in juvenile court, and the court sent him to VORP to set restitution. (A person unwilling to admit the offense cannot participate in VORP).

The first step was to meet with the offender and his family to make sure he was really ready to participate. The house was hard to find. I wasn't even aware there were houses there on the far side of the freeway. The offender was home, but his aunt, with whom he was living, was not. VORP wants parents or guardians present for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that the process and follow-up go better when they are involved. The aunt in this case was working long hours away from home, and wasn't prepared to participate. I asked the of-

fender to describe what he had done and he told the story of wanting a car to go somewhere, and deciding with a friend to take one from the theater parking lot.

"I'd have to steal it."

I described the VORP process and asked if it sounded like something he would like

The standard measure of justice throughout human history has been compensation for losses and the righting of relationships. Village cultures can't afford the luxury of locking someone up, which means supporting them and their family.

to do. He said he would like to. Then I asked what he would do if the owner wanted cash restitution. There would surely be at least an insurance deductible the owners were out. He thought for a while and said, "Well, I guess I'd have to steal it." So we talked some more about the

whole idea of making things right. As it turned out, this teenager was an undocumented alien who couldn't get a job. His parents were working far from home and had no money. The only way he could pay restitution was by working for the victim or someone else who would pay him.

Then I met with the victims, a couple in their 50s. This was their first new car and its theft was devastating. Worse, in stealing the car the offender had used a body shop dent puller to remove the ignition. The electrical system was seriously damaged, and in numerous trips to the dealer it could not be successfully repaired. They had lost the use of the car for almost a month, and now had an unreliable car. I described the VORP process, told them about the offender, and made an appointment for a meeting.

When the day of the meeting came, the offender didn't show up. I called him at home and he was there. His aunt had been called in to work and he was stranded miles from the meeting place. The vic-

tims went to a restaurant to eat and I drove out to pick up the offender. The round trip took an hour. The meeting went well. The offender told the story of the theft and answered questions. The victims were puzzled about him taking a car right under a light. He said: "That gave us light to see what we were doing." Then the victims told in detail how the theft had impacted them. The offender was visibly moved. He hadn't wanted to cause trouble like that, he just wanted a ride.

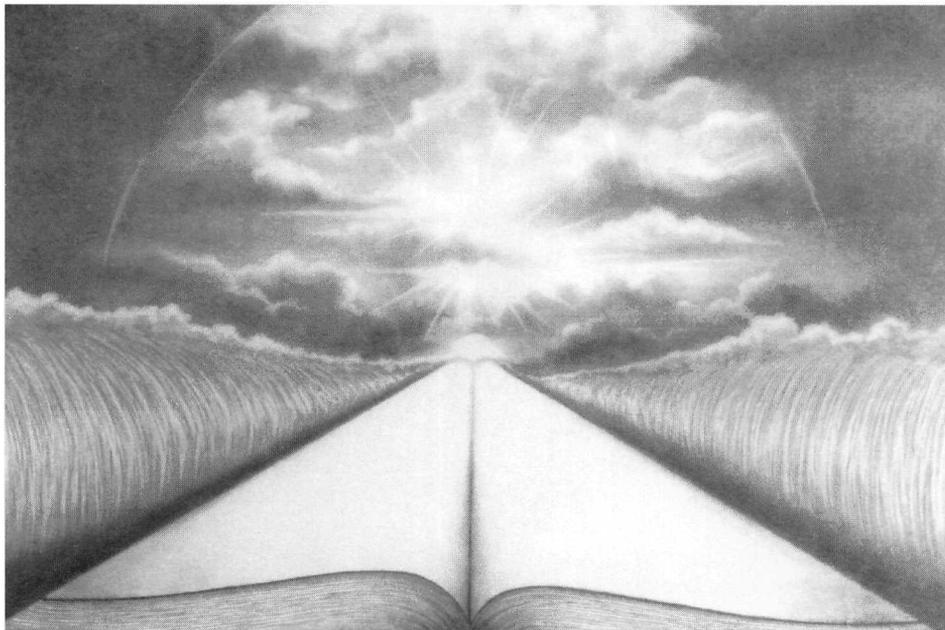
Finding a solution

How to make things right? The victims had close to a thousand dollars of out of pocket damages, and a new car they couldn't trust. The offender described his situation. He wanted to do what was right, but didn't see how he could pay them back. The couple talked about the problem and made a proposal which the offender accepted. The woman was moving her professional office the next week. He would come and help her move. Then on Thanksgiving he would go with them to help serve dinner at a soup kitchen. The solution satisfied everyone. The woman asked: "Are you going to steal our car again?" "No," the offender replied, obviously amazed at the suggestion.

Offenders who go through the VORP process are much less likely to re-offend, according to studies, and if they do re-offend it is usually at a lower level. By supporting and volunteering in a program like VORP, the church community can have a positive impact on community safety and security. It can also help turn offenders back onto a productive path.

VORP in prison

What about those who wind up in prison? Is restorative justice of any relevance to them? The principles of restorative justice can be applied to any situation, from home to school to criminal justice, and prison is no exception. There are at least two restorative projects in California which are



Genesis by Mark Killingsworth

happening inside correctional institutions.

Inmates at the men's prison in Vacaville formed a Victim Offender Reconciliation Group some years back. These men are unlikely to meet their own victims, having committed serious or violent felonies. VORG aims to help inmates become aware of the personal damage they have done to their victims, and to perform symbolic restitution through community service. The group brings in representative victims, such as volunteers from Bay Area Women Against Rape, to talk about the personal cost of victimization. The idea is to help the men rebuild the feelings of empathy which they had to deny to commit their crimes, and which prison tends to drive out as well. As it happened, the first "graduate" of the group was paroled to Fresno. Some very experienced VORP volunteers set up a support group for him, and he had not re-offended at the time of his death.

At the other end of the incarceration spectrum, Fresno VORP is working with Fresno County's new boot camp program. The cadets go through an extensive victim awareness training as part of their

program. When they are ready to graduate, VORP holds a Community Justice Conference. This meeting brings together the cadet, his or her extended family, the victim and any advocates the victim desires, a probation officer and any other community or professional persons who would be helpful, to work out an aftercare plan for the cadet. The plan is developed by consensus, and can include anything the group believes would be helpful to the cadet in becoming a productive member of the community. VORP and the probation department then monitor the cadet's progress with the plan. If the plan breaks down, the group comes together again.

Crime creates obligations. As restorative processes help offenders accept responsibility for their actions and make things as right as possible with the victim, our communities become safer, better places to live. **TW**

www.thewitness.org

The Witness' website has recently been revamped and improved! Check out the changes at www.thewitness.org.

Radical mutuality still out of reach

by Ian T. Douglas

For 35 years the Anglican Communion has heralded the coming of the Church in the Southern Hemisphere. Since the Anglican Congress of 1963, the Anglican Communion has acknowledged, in rhetoric anyway, that Anglicanism is no longer a Church identified exclusively with the industrialized West. The Congress' manifesto, "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ" (MRI), called for a radical mutuality and sharing of power and resources. No longer would rich churches in the West be the givers and poor churches in the South receivers. Rather, there would be one common global household of God sharing God's mission of reconciliation together. Today, following Lambeth 1998, it is clear that: 1) the emergence of the Church in the South has gone beyond rhetoric resulting in a profound shift in power within Anglicanism from the industrialized West to the Southern Hemisphere; 2) the cultural hegemony on which both liberal and traditionalist Western Anglicans have traded since the advent of the Anglican

Communion has begun to crack; and 3) the mutual responsibility and interdependence envisioned by the 1963 Congress remain out of reach in today's Anglican Communion.

Church convention watchers in the U.S. would do well to observe how the calls of Resolution 1.15 to amend diocesan budgets for the sake of the poor compare with diocesan resolutions affirming or decrying Lambeth's position on sexuality.

The first few weeks of Lambeth promised hope of a renewed Anglican Communion where a multiplicity of voices could come together around a shared vision of God's calling to us as followers of Christ. Anglicans do worship well and our gatherings around the table offered hope for a new Church, a new humanity. The opening service in historic Canterbury Cathedral was filled with the promise of new life embodied in symbols and words from Kenya, Central America, Brazil, Egypt, Tanzania, and the Seychelles, to name but a few. Never before had Anglicanism staged, in so public a way, a Eucharist where the radical plurality of

voices that make up the Communion was heard and celebrated.

The daily worship of the Conference also offered the promise of many voices with service orders and leadership from almost every church in the Anglican Communion. Unfortunately, the difficulties of sharing a common cup in two sweltering gymnasiums and the apparent need for each Province to include as many bishops as possible in each liturgical event seriously undermined the worshipping experience. Perhaps if we had all gone home after the opening service, the possibilities for Anglicanism to embrace a new level of mutuality and interdependence among disparate peoples and voices would have been better served.

Initial commonality on issues

Initially the Conference seemed to find some commonality on issues, especially the evils of international debt. The desire to challenge the international monetary order that cripples poor countries with outrageous debt service payments at the expense of local initiatives in education and health care was the one issue raised by all pre-Lambeth regional meetings. There was genuine possibility that the Anglican Communion would call for a jubilee of international debt. The strength of such a voice was not lost on the powers and principalities as Jim Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, reeled defensively in the face Church pressure to forgive debt. The strong leadership of Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndugane of Southern Africa, who chaired Section One: "Called to Full Humanity," helped to give voice to those who suffer the most at the hands of international debt. Resolution 1.15 on "International Debt and Economic Justice" moved by Section One and ultimately embraced by the Conference is a far-reaching and profound call to political, corporate and church leaders for amendment of life for the sake of a new common-wealth of God.

This longest and most substantial of all the close to 100 resolutions passed by the 1998 Lambeth Conference [for a listing

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The logo for 'Vital Signs' features a stylized white cross on a black background, with the words 'Vital Signs' written in a white, cursive script to its right.

see TW 10/98], was more than polemics. It laid out a clear plan of action for leaders of debtor and creditor nations and leaders of the Church. If taken seriously, the resolution will have direct and lasting implications on how we handle our money, including challenging dioceses to fund international development programs at the level of at least 0.7 percent of annual total diocesan income. Church convention watchers in the U.S. would do well to observe how the calls of Resolution 1.15 to amend diocesan budgets for the sake of the poor compare with diocesan resolutions affirming or decrying Lambeth's position on sexuality.

Radical pronouncements ignored by Western press

The majority of resolutions put forward by Section I were consistent with the resolution on international debt and called on the Church to take a prophetic stand for the poor and the oppressed of the world. There were resolutions affirming the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights (I.1), calling for: justice for women and children (I.3), solidarity with those who suffer in Northern and Western Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi (I.6 and I.7), and the cessation of the use of

nuclear weapons and land mines (I.11 and I.13). Two resolutions on creation (I.8) and ecology (I.9) resonated deeply with the radical call to conversion and amendment of life embodied throughout the section's work. Resolution I.8 on creation proclaimed unequivocally that "unbridled capitalism, selfishness and greed cannot continue to be allowed to pollute, exploit and destroy what remains of the earth's indigenous habitats and that the future of human beings and all life on earth hangs in balance as a consequence of the present unjust economic structures, the injustice between the rich and the poor, the continuing exploitation of the natural environment and the threat of nuclear self-destruction." The fact that such radical pronouncements as these from Lambeth are not lifted up in the American secular and religious press is not surprising since they call Western Christians to actively work against the capitalist structures that privilege us at the expense of the world's poor.

Proclamation without reconciliation and unity

Section II of the Lambeth Conference focused its work around the theme "Called

to Live and Proclaim the Good News." Most of the resolutions from this section advanced theologies of mission with a primary imperative on the proclamation of the Gospel. Its seven resolutions sought to advance or protect evangelization initiatives in a variety of contexts and dealt with such topics as: religious liberty in Islamic societies (II.4), concerns over the processes of increased urbanization (II.7) and the contributions of young people to the Church and the world (II.8). What was lacking in most of the resolutions from Section II was a shared vision with Section I of God's mission as that of reconciliation and unity of all people with God and each other in Christ.

The missiological imperative of reconciliation lacking in Section II, however, resurfaced in Section IV, "Called to be One." Here the Anglican Communion's commitment to the full, visible unity of the Church, embodied in both the ecumenical movement and bilateral conversations with other distinct churches was affirmed. In over 25 resolutions, the Lambeth Conference embraced initiatives by which Anglicans could work together with sisters and brother Christians across the world's traditions.

Disparate and diverse resolutions from the regions

Many of the themes of sections I, II, IV were echoed in over 30 resolutions submitted by groups of bishops from geographic regions. These resolutions were a grab bag of pronouncements as diverse as the regions themselves. Resolutions on "International Debt Cancellation and the Alleviation of Poverty" (V.2), and "A Call for Solidarity in Working for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation in the World" (V.3) were bumped up alongside of resolutions on an Anglican provincial structure for continental Europe (V.6), the end of the United States embargo against Cuba (V.9), religious persecution in Pakistan (V.19), Korean unification (V.26) and thanksgiving for the end of Apartheid in South Africa (V.31). The fact that the

Call for national church nominations

The Joint Standing Committee on Nominations for the General Convention 2000, is requesting nominations for members of the Executive Council, the General Board of Examining Chaplains, trustees for the Church Pension Fund and the General Theological Seminary, all of whom will be elected at General Convention. The Committee will nominate twice the number of candidates that is available for each vacant office.

Nominations are to be "broadly representative of the constituency of the Church," (Joint Rule 21 of the rules of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies). Biographical sketches

will be prepared on all nominees and published in the General Convention 2000 Blue Book.

Nomination Proposal forms must be completed in full, including the nominee's biographical data, photograph, and signature. Forms are available from the General Convention Office, Joint Standing Committee on Nominations, Attn.: Mr. Vincent C. Currie, Jr., 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017 or by calling the General Convention Office at 1-800-334-7626. Nominations should be received by the committee by December 1, 1998. Nominees for positions will be notified by the Committee by September 30, 1999.

resolutions from the regional groups were so disparate and diverse, speaking from so many different cultural, political and theological contexts, was a manifestation of the breadth of the Communion. It was unfortunate that the crush of business and the political wrangling in debates over sexuality in the closing week of Lambeth overshadowed the richness and plurality of voices from the regional groups.

Can faithfulness and pluralism coexist?

The multivocal nature of the regional groups, however, stood in opposition to the work and resolutions of Section III. The section's title, "Called to be a Faithful Church in a Plural World," gave away the section's biases. Here a "faithful church" was cast in an oppositional relationship to a "plural world." The hermeneutical assumption here was that faithfulness and pluralism cannot coexist. The multiplicity of voices in the Church and beyond are not to be celebrated but rather overcome. It is no surprise then that the majority of resolutions coming out of Section III sought to define the limits and boundaries of both Christian belief and the Anglican Communion. Resolutions on "The Bible" (III.1), "The Unity of the Anglican Communion" (III.2), "Subsidiarity" (III.3) and "The Authority of Holy Scripture" (III.5) all tried to articulate a "classical" Anglican ecclesiology that lifted up the authority of Scripture and the creeds and that of local diocesan episcopate. Section III relied uncritically on the formularies of both the Eames Commission report and the Virginia Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (resolutions III.4 and III.8 respectively). The fact that these reports were heavily influenced by and primarily authored by Anglo-American men who sought to manage diversity in the face of increased pluralism in the Church and the world seemed lost on most at Lambeth.

The Eames and Virginia Reports represent a last gasp effort to make room for those who are "different" at the table of Anglicanism without challenging the

cultural and theological hegemony upon which the table rested. What is called for, however, and what ultimately began to show itself at Lambeth, was that many in the Anglican Communion today do not want a seat at the table of Western Anglicanism but rather are seeking a place in a different kind of household.

Increasing primatial drift: the ACC vs the Primates

The final bid of Western hegemony to manage the increasing plurality of voices in the Anglican Communion is manifested in resolution III.6 on "Instruments of the Anglican Communion." Those who worried about an increasing primatial drift in the Anglican Communion need look no further than this resolution for confirmation of their fears. This resolution asks "the Primates' Meeting, under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury ... to exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters" across the Communion. It further empowers the Primates' Meeting, once again under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to intervene with "moral authority" in Anglican

Churches "in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces, and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and in loyalty to our Anglican tradition and formularies." Whose Anglican tradition and formularies??? Finally Resolution III.6 recommends that the bishops representing each province in the Anglican Consultative Council should be the primates of the province, thus excluding other episcopal representation in the only international, representative council of the Church.

What most people fail to consider in the passage of this resolution is the history that led to both the founding of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Primates' Meeting. The genesis of the ACC lays in MRI and the Anglican Congress of 1963. Seeking a new way for sisters and brothers to come together for mutual sharing and consultation, the ACC was founded in 1971 as a representative body of the churches of the Anglican Communion made up equal numbers of bishops, priest, and lay people. The ACC, meeting approximately every three years for almost three decades, has taken a variety of important stands and positions, including the affirmation of the ordination of women in 1976 and 1979. Shortly thereafter, Presiding Bishop John Allin of the U.S. called together the primates of the Anglican Communion to counter the progressive steps of the lay people, priests, and bishops of the ACC. This first meeting of the primates to rebuff the ACC position on the ordination of women would lead to ongoing regular meetings of Anglican archbishops. And so the Primates' Meeting was born not of far reaching and inclusive imperatives but rather of reactionary and conservative fears of change.

Through the years the relationship between the ACC and the Primates' Meeting has been both tenuous and careful. This was vividly demonstrated in the joint meeting of the ACC and the Primates in Cape Town, South Africa in

Resolution III.6 thus undermines the sense of mutuality at the heart of the Anglican Consultative Council. It gives the Primates' Meeting unheard of extra-metropolitan authority to intervene in the life of Anglican provinces locally, while eviscerating the sharing of power with lay people and priests in the old ACC.

1993. Many agreed that the meeting, although useful for coordination of initiatives, seriously curtailed the ACC and its work. The gathering of archbishops was simply too weighty to be countered by the lay people, priests, and bishops gathered in the ACC. Substituting the Primates for the bishops on the ACC, Resolution III.6 virtually guarantees the silencing of priests and lay people on the ACC. Who in their right mind would speak out against either their own archbishop or the gathered Primates in an ACC meeting? As if this slide to primatial power was not enough, even the consultative imperative of the Anglican Consultative Council was symbolically done away with in Resolution III.6 by changing the name of the ACC to the Anglican Communion Council.

Resolution III.6 thus undermines the sense of mutuality at the heart of the Anglican Consultative Council. It gives

the Primates' Meeting enhanced responsibility for pan-Anglican doctrinal and moral matters and unheard of extra-metropolitan authority to intervene in the life of Anglican provinces locally, while eviscerating the sharing of power with lay people and priests in the old Anglican Consultative Council. Resolution III.6 creates for the first time an Anglican Curia under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Fears over loss of hegemony

Is a new Anglican Curia really what we want in the Anglican Communion today? Is a curia of any kind the best way forward in these tenuous times where Western power is being tested and an increased plurality of voices are being heard across the Communion? Here lies the real issue in Lambeth's discussions over sexuality. I suspect that in their heart of hearts those

in the West who fought so hard (and were so astute politically) to make Lambeth about sex really are afraid of the loss of straight, white, male Western hegemony in the Anglican Communion today. The fact that Western traditionalists were able to find a collegial voice in Third World Church leaders was not due so much to shared theological and scriptural understandings but rather to the dynamics of increased pluralism in the Anglican Communion. While Anglo-American conservatives sought to reassert the cultural, moral and ecclesiological norms of a church gone by, Third World church leaders struggled to find their voice in a new church and new world. Whereas the former is reactive and backward looking, the latter is progressive, looking forward.

Neither conservatives nor liberals in the West, however, are willing to cede their hegemonic ways to the emerging church in the South. We simply do not want to give up our power. Conservatives applaud the victory of their position on sexuality at Lambeth made possible by bishops in Africa, Asia and Latin America while liberals try to discount the voices of the South as uneducated, unsophisticated, and unenlightened. Both positions are ultimately racist and imperialist, for neither side wants to give up our control over the life of the Communion. The way out of this morass is not to be found in a new Anglican Curia, under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor more resolutions from Lambeth. We in the West must realize that we are no longer at the center. We must realize that our beloved Anglicanism is no longer the church of our white ancestors but rather a church of the poor who suffer at the hands of political and economic structures of our own making. It will be a long and difficult journey for those of us who have found comfort and power in Western hegemony. But in the promise of plurality released at the first Pentecost and now located in the diversity of voices across the church in the South is the hope of our new life in the Body of Christ — and is the hope of the new Anglican Communion.

Churches question state-sponsored gambling

Eighteen Canadian church leaders have sent a joint letter to the nation's justice minister calling for an independent review of state-sponsored gambling in Canada.

David Pfrimmer, of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy, said, "What's remarkable is the unanimous ecumenical consensus among the Christian churches in Canada that state-sponsored gambling is bad public policy, bad economics and bad public morality."

There are more than 50 casinos in Canada, and there are plans for more to be built. Recent estimates state that the casinos earn profits of \$1.75 billion a year; federal and provincial governments take almost half this amount as taxes and duties. A national magazine, *MacLeans*, reported in May that the average Canadian household was gambling \$840 each year.

The churches, which are members of the Canadian Council of Churches, the nation's principal ecumenical organization, demonstrated their united opposition to gambling by sending the

letter to Anne McLellan, minister of justice and attorney general of Canada. Among those signing the letter was Jim Boyles, general secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada.

The church leaders wrote: "The promotion of state-sponsored gambling is at an all-time high in Canada." They asked the government to establish an independent body "to review the social, economic and legal impact of legal and illegal gambling and charitable gaming in Canada, and to make recommendations regarding public policy."

The leaders also called for Canada's 10 provinces to "place a moratorium on gambling expansion until such time as a public review has been completed and policy recommendations have been enacted." The letter said the church leaders understood the provinces' need for revenue. "However, it is difficult to recognize government's duty to uphold the public interest in provincial plans to increase the number of gamblers and the frequency with which they gamble and lose." — *ENI*

An FBI agent's conscience

by Jim Douglass

What is at stake in the Justice Department's reopened investigation into the assassination of Martin Luther King? Judging from the story of Donald G. Wilson, it could be the power of an FBI agent's conscience to uncover a monstrous question. When King was shot to death on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Wilson was a 25-year-old FBI agent in Atlanta. He had joined the FBI to "do something positive in civil rights from an investigative standpoint."

During his FBI training, however, Wilson was shocked to see the bureau upholding segregated housing in Maryland for the only black member of his class. "It became patently clear," he said, "this was a racist organization."

As Wilson spoke his mind to fellow agents about racist incidents in the bureau, he was given a stark warning. On an assignment where only the FBI knew his identity and whereabouts, he received a phone call from an "operator" who told him to return home immediately — his baby daughter was deathly ill. Wilson phoned his wife and learned their child was fine. But he knew the FBI had sent him a message.

In Atlanta the bureau assigned its agent not to his first choice of duty, civil rights, but to the politically more innocuous stolen cars division. It thereby unwittingly facilitated Wilson's becoming the first FBI agent

Jim Douglass is a long-time peace activist now working on a book about the King and Kennedy assassinations.

to open the door of James Earl Ray's abandoned white Mustang, in an Atlanta parking lot, one week after King's assassination. There he discovered two papers, each bearing the name "Raul," in the midst of other written information. He kept the papers secret from the bureau he had learned to distrust.

In 1997, two decades after his resignation from the FBI, Wilson showed the

The paper Wilson preserved 29 years in a vault turns out to be evidence of a connection between the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy.

papers to Coretta King, after seeing on TV her moving courtroom appeal for a trial for James Earl Ray. Ray had claimed repeatedly that Raul was the name of the mysterious gunrunner who set him up, whereas the government denied Raul's existence. Mrs. King made Wilson's Raul papers the primary basis for her appeal for a new investigation into her husband's murder, which is now taking place.

Wilson recently phoned me from his home near Chicago to describe what he and his wife were experiencing from the reopened investigation. Wilson first refused to turn over the papers to the Justice Department, which has had him and his bank under surveillance. Then he and his wife received haranguing phone calls from lead investigator Barry Kowalski. Federal investigators began to question neighbors about the Wilsons. Kowalski obtained a search warrant from a Chicago judge to go

into Wilson's bank vault after the papers. Wilson finally surrendered them to a federal marshal who promptly contaminated them, confirming Wilson's sense that the government had no intention of treating them as proper evidence. Then in an unexplained incident, the tires on Mrs. Wilson's car were slashed.

Wilson noted a discrepancy in the government's attitude. On the one hand, Barry Kowalski wrote him a preliminary letter (with a copy to Coretta King) saying he considered Wilson's evidence critical to the investigation. On the other hand, the FBI publicly proclaimed his evidence a fabrication.

Is there anything in the papers seized by the Justice Department that could indeed be "critical," not to a bogus investigation of a martyr's death, but to the legitimacy of the government conducting it?

One of the papers is what Wilson calls the "telephone document." It was identified by an investigator working with Ray's attorney William F. Pepper as a page from a 1963 Dallas telephone book. Wilson says he was astounded to learn further from Pepper that a phone number written at the top of the page, preceded by the letter "J" and followed by the name "Raul" and an extension number, was listed in 1963 as belonging to Jack Ruby's Vegas Club in Dallas.

The paper Wilson preserved 29 years in a vault and then shared with Coretta King turns out to be evidence not only of Raul's existence but of a connection between the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy.

In 1998 at age 55, Wilson is a teacher in a special tutoring program for high school students with behavioral problems. He takes a special pride in his students' achievements. He hopes he doesn't lose his job as a result of the public stand he's taken. In our last phone conversation he said quietly, "This takes a lot of faith. It's so disheartening what these people of power do." **TW**



Requiem for the Capeman

by Edwin Muller

Paul Simon's musical, *Capeman*, opened on Broadway in January and closed a few months later following much controversy and poor reviews. One newspaper called it "Paul Simon's murder musical." Another suggested it was like a wounded animal that needed to be put out of its misery. Simon considered it the culmination of his musical career. I saw the opening and considered it an excellent production. Why, then, did one of the most costly and widely advertized musicals ever produced on Broadway fail so quickly? The answer is to be found in the emerging mythology of our culture and in what we believe about the fundamental human condition.

Early on in his project, Paul Simon called me and asked if I would do some research on the biblical theme of redemption. When I later read that the theme of the musical was to be redemption, I sensed it might be in trouble. Since Russia is no longer "the evil empire," we are a society in search of new demons. We seem to have centered on the poor, people with AIDS, the homeless and people in prison. In our mythology, demons are objects to be destroyed. Our society does not want its demons redeemed. "Can I forgive him, can I forgive him? No, I cannot," are words that ring out in one of the songs.

In 1959 Salvador Agron committed a crime in which two teenage boys were killed on a playground in New York City. He was the war counselor of a gang and wore a nurse's cape. His friend Hernandez carried a sharpened umbrella. The media labeled them the "Capeman" and the

"Umbrella Man."

Agron was sentenced to death at age 16. Because of his age, Eleanor Roosevelt made a plea for clemency. Governor Rockefeller responded and changed Agron's sentence from death to life. After three years in Sing Sing's death house, he spent another 20 years in New York State prisons. I was his chaplain for 15 of those years.

Our society does not want its demons redeemed.

In prison, Agron learned to read and write. He became a poet, attended college and eventually participated in a college study release program. In prison at night, on campus during the day, he lived what he called a "Jekyll and Hyde" existence. Convinced he would never make parole, he ran away to Arizona where there was a Hispanic governor. He was brought back to New York and tried for escape. Found not guilty due to impaired judgment, he was returned to prison for another two years and then paroled. He lived six years in the "free world," then died a natural death.

Today Agron would probably never receive clemency from death to life. He certainly would not attend college in prison or go on study release. Those programs have been canceled. He would not be found innocent of escape and probably would not be paroled.

During the 31 years I have been a chaplain, I have seen the New York State prison population grow from 11,000 to over 70,000. Sixteen prisons to seventy. About 80 percent of the inmates come from eight neighborhoods, seven of which

are in New York City. Books like Jonathan Kozol's *Amazing Grace* tell us what is going on in places like the South Bronx. The crime generative factors of urban decay and human desolation are so profound that prison seems to be at the end of every road.

Prior to the Attica riot in 1971, prisoners were completely cut off from the outside world. I remember one man who came to prison in a stagecoach in 1911. He was still in prison in the early 1970s. Another man, sentenced to 40 years to life in 1945, was given a 25-year subscription to a daily newspaper by his family. Three newspapers went out of existence during his sentence. After the *World, Mirror and Sun*, he ended up with *The New York Times*.

After Attica, we were inundated with all kinds of projects and programs. We knowingly agreed to participate in the superficial activity rather than address the profound human problems. This went on for 20 years until a new shift took place. Now we have few programs, extremely long sentences, a large number of 23-hour-a-day cells, little parole and no hope. People in prison may be out of sight for a longer period of time, but they are not out of mind. They are at the center of our new set of demons.

What we really need now is a requiem and not a musical. Salvador Agron is dead, but the Capeman is very much alive as a symbol of what society hates. We can put him to rest by transforming him into a symbol of the thousands of young people today who deserve a better way than the road that leads to prison. **TW**

Edwin Muller is Director of Chaplaincy for the State of New York.

Joyce Dixson is devoted to creating a space to meet the needs of women in the prison system, and the children that system forces them to leave behind. Through Sons and Daughters of the Incarcerated (SADOI), a program she created, Dixson offers counseling to young people who face the confusion and fear that comes with having a parent in prison.

"If a mother goes to jail on Tuesday, that child is expected to be in school on Wednesday," Dixson says. "And a child is not going to go to school and say, 'I look like a mess and I'm sleeping in your class because my mother went to jail.' Teachers just see this as bad behavior and the children wind up in the principal's office. When I've talked to teachers about this, they've told me that it was better to ignore it so they wouldn't embarrass [the children]."

"Losing a parent, particularly a mother, to prison is the most devastating thing that can happen to a child, short of that parent's death," she adds. "They're torn between the guilt and shame and feelings of loss and abandonment, and dealing with the person (a relative, foster parent or other guardian) who is not used to them."

Dixson created SADOI in 1995, two years after she herself had been released from a Michigan prison. She had served 17 years and 120 days of what had been a life sentence.

"I was incarcerated in 1976 for shooting my abusive partner," she explains. "In the 1970s, there were not many domestic violence laws for women. I ended up in the old

"Researchers are saying that the number one predictor of whether a child will be incarcerated is whether a parent has been incarcerated."



Joyce Dixson

Advocating for prisoners' children

by Leah Samuel

Detroit House of Corrections — DeHoCo — which was the only prison for women in Michigan at the time.

Going to prison gave Dixson a firsthand look at the sexism that fueled the lack of resources and services for women prisoners and their children.

"I learned that women were totally disregarded, and held in no respect," she says. "Women had no court access. We didn't have jailhouse lawyers because we didn't have law libraries. There was no education for women, while men [prisoners] were being bussed to universities to complete degrees.

"Once, some officials came through," Dixson adds. "The question I asked them was, 'Why did men have so much and women have nothing?' I was told to my face that men had more because men needed more. I think it was at that time that I wanted to learn how to be an advocate for women." Dixson started by advocating for

herself. She learned a lot from a group of young, progressive women attorneys, who filed a lawsuit against the Michigan Department of Corrections over the lack of services for incarcerated women.

"In 1982, we won," Dixson says. "We've been fighting to get the department to comply ever since."

Women prisoners did get some services, including work and education programs which gave them an opportunity to earn money and gain skills. A pilot education program allowed Dixson and a few other women to earn degrees from the University of Michigan. But, like some of the other gains for incarcerated women, that program was cancelled soon afterward.

While completing her university education, Dixson also got training and work — as a paralegal for the prison's legal services department. "I found out that, at that time, if a woman was in prison she could be

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

Leah Samuel is a Detroit-based free-lance writer.

found guilty of neglect for not being with her children.

"My own children were six and eight when I left," she says of her two sons. "They were really lucky, because they weren't separated or put in foster care."

Nonetheless, there were effects.

"Children of the incarcerated are socially ostracized, and they are sometimes treated as if they had committed the crime," Dixon explains. "My older son was fighting in school almost every day because kids were teasing him about me. So he went and did what kids do—he found other kids like himself."

Dixon describes her release from prison as "a miracle" of coincidences, opened doors and open minds.

"I had a tremendous amount of support from people in the community," she says. "A woman judge was elected. My charge was reduced to second-degree murder, and I was released."

But going home revealed for Dixon an even more compelling motivation to work with children.

"I had been in prison trying to become the best woman I can be for myself and my children, and I come back and my son is serving a natural life sentence for con-

spiracy to commit murder. I figured I had to do something."

Her opportunity came when Michigan's Washtenaw County allowed her to start working with juvenile offenders. She had the tools to do it. She was a certified paralegal with a master's degree from the University of Michigan. But it was her incarceration experience, she says, that was the most valuable to her work.

"[In prison] I met a lot of women and worked with a lot of their children's cases, involving children that were really small. Now, some of those same kids were in my program, in juvenile cases.

"I had such wonderful relationships with them. And it's not because I'm so great, but because I do what nobody else has taken the time to do: relieve their minds. I answer questions for them—the questions they always have but never could ask, like 'Does my mother walk around with a ball and chain and drink water out of the toilet?' They have so many fears."

These days, Dixon works as an independent contractor, seeing 65-150 children each school year. SADOI now has a board of directors, and is working on becoming a non-profit agency.

"We want to make it so that every child

with a parent in prison can have this. We have to get to them early. Researchers are saying that the number one predictor of whether a child will be incarcerated is whether a parent has been incarcerated."

Dixon believes that the issues facing incarcerated women, and the factors that put women in prison, are challenges that still have to be met.

"If anything, it's gotten worse," she says. "More and more prisons are being constructed and reconstructed and money is going into warehousing people. There has to be alternative sentencing for non-assaultive offenses, and an end to mandatory minimum sentences.

"We have to get the men out of the women's prisons, and that will cut down on the rape and sexual abuse. Women already come in with low self-esteem, and most of the women in prison are there because of their male partners. And we're letting men run prisons.

"We have to start working with the children of incarcerated mothers and fathers," she adds. "We have to get immediate intervention for them, to break the chain of intergenerational incarceration."

That chain has been broken in Dixon's family. Her younger son recently graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a degree in broadcast journalism.

"That lets me know that the children of the incarcerated don't have to go to prison," she says.

Dixon asserts strongly that her spirituality and her experiences help her meet the demands of her own growth.

"I am 47 now and taking nothing for granted," she declares. "I am a woman who is trying to find a way to reach my potential. Too much of my time was wasted and lost. I am trying very, very hard not to limit myself because of my fears, or because of my past. In prison I decided to totally surrender myself to God. Whatever happens to me is all right as long as I know I'm in the right place with Him."

TW

We ask your prayers

This past Labor Day *Witness* staff and close friends were shocked to learn that *Witness* co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann was suffering the incapacitating side effects of a brain tumor.



Jeanie underwent surgery on October 1. Most, but not all, of the growth was removed. To everyone's dismay, the pathology report showed it to be an aggressive, fast-growing cancer.

Witness readers will recall that in the October issue Jeanie speculates that environmental toxins may account for a large share of the headaches and allergic reactions she has suffered over the past decade. She now wonders about a possible similar cause behind this tumor.

We've set up a spot on our Web site, <www.thewitness.org>, for Jeanie and her partner Bill to post updates on her condition and offer reflections on how this tumor is affecting their views on life, the universe and everything.

As Jeanie pursues treatment (her age and good health are working in her favor), we ask readers to keep her, Bill and their two daughters, Lydia and Lucy, in their prayers.

— J.W.

“Socialists and left-wing radicals of all kinds often forget to celebrate the fullness of life, preferring dry analysis to dancing. ...

... Of course, analysis is critical for liberation struggles but at *The Witness* you balance analysis with the beauty, celebration and struggle of being human in art, poetry, good humor and a healthy dose of self-criticism!” — Paul D. Butler, London, England

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