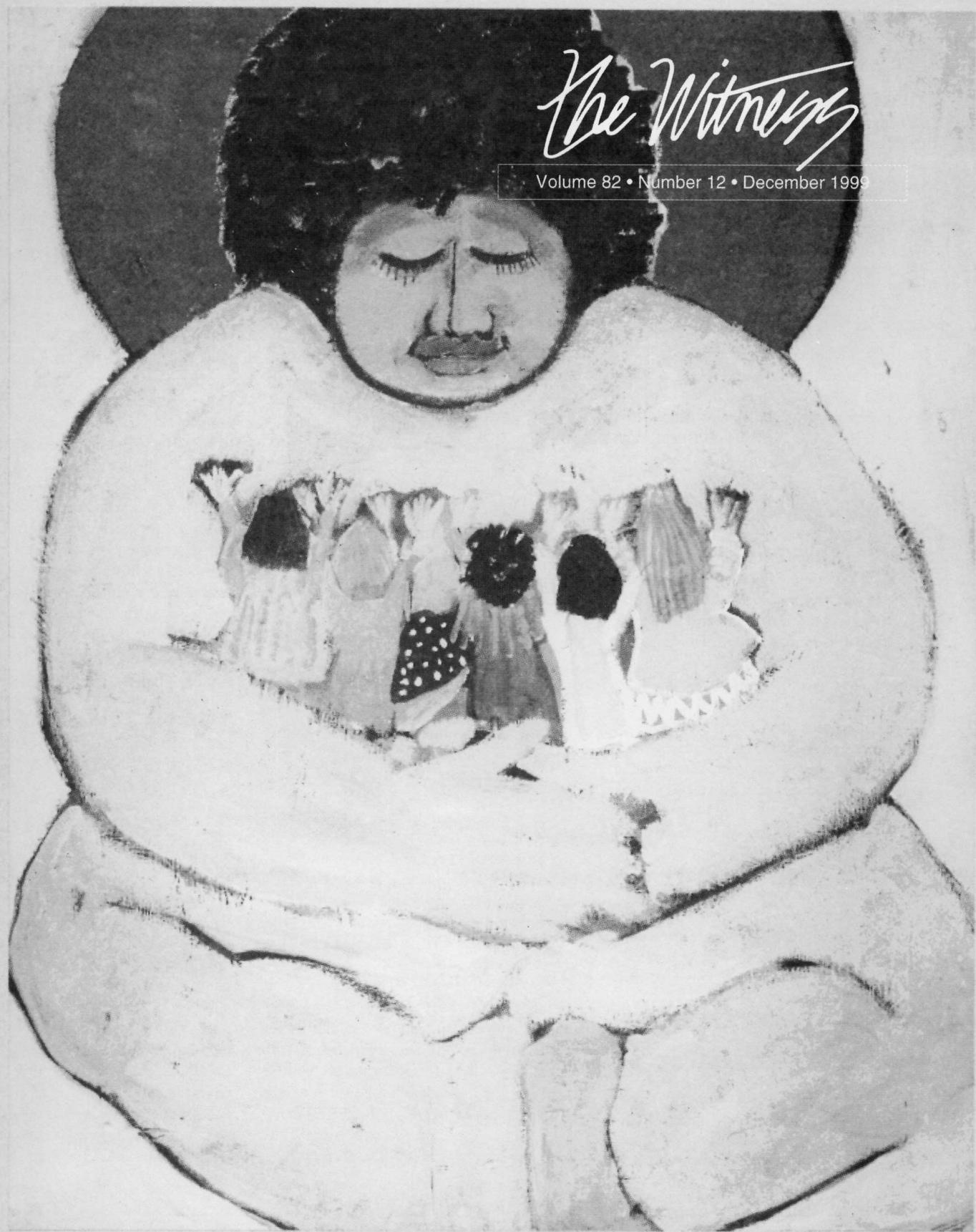


# *The Witness*

Volume 82 • Number 12 • December 1999



*Recovering from human evil*

## Nuclearism today

THANKS FOR THE COVERAGE OF THE Healing Global Wounds "Honor Your Mother Gathering" in the October issue. I was present at the event and enjoyed your coverage. Nevada Desert Experience worked with Healing Global Wounds for that event. We are a faith based group working for the end of nuclear testing and weapons. We will be hosting a gathering: Millennium 2000: Walking the Ways of Peace from 30 December to 2 January, which includes speakers such as Jonathan Schell, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Dan Berrigan and others. We will have a prayer vigil and greet the new year by crossing into the Nevada Test Site. You can find out more about us at <www.shundahai.org/nde>.

**Mark P. Blaise Page**  
Las Vegas, NV

I HAVE MADE COPIES of Steven Charleston's "Set Leonard Peltier Free" as a hand-out at our weekly Peace Vigil, in preparation for our annual international gathering at the Peace Arch at the Washington/British Columbia border, to free Leonard Peltier.

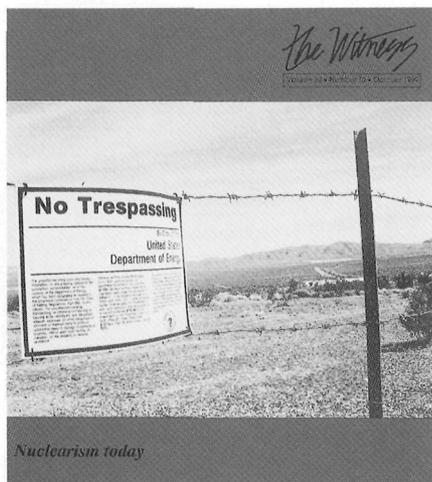
I have also shared Patricia Holt's "Independent Bookstores Fight Back" with our friends who own our wonderful local Village Books in Bellingham, Wash.

All this plus the excellent items on nuclearism today, taking me back to my arrest at the Nevada Test Site in 1989. Thank you for your ongoing ministry for peace and justice.

**Dorothy Dale**  
Bellingham, WA

YOUR ISSUE "NUCLEARISMTODAY" is stunning both emotionally (Julie Wortman's journey to the Test Site) and factually.

I'm ordering a few extra copies to send to some political candidates and others in a position to influence public policy regarding



the appalling reliance on nuclear weapons. I hope other readers will, too.

**Pat Roberts**  
Lawrenceville, NJ

## Millennium 2000

THE BUDDHIST MONK Thich Nhat Hanh, in his book *Living Buddha Living Christ*, emphasizes that the deepest way we can approach our faith tradition is as a living truth. If we embrace this insight, encounters which we have with other faith traditions can draw us more deeply into the roots of our own tradition.

Unfortunately, historically, one faith tradition has encountered another as the extension of an imperialist power. Religion has often been used as a tool to bring people of other traditions under the thumb of a dominating world power.

For those of us in the Christian tradition, we have lost sight of the simple truth Christ taught: "With others, those in authority lord it over one another; it is not to be so among you. He or she who is first is to be least and the servant of all."

Thich Nhat Hanh writes that during the Vietnam War, when he encountered Christians who were truly living out their own tradition and actively working to help establish peace, it allowed him to experience Christianity not as an imperialist power but as a living truth. In *Living Buddha Living Christ*, Hanh quotes Professor Hans Kung: "Until there is peace between religions, there can be

no peace in the world." Hanh continues: "People kill and are killed because they cling too tightly to their own beliefs and ideologies. When we believe that ours is the only faith that contains the truth, violence and suffering will surely be the result." Hanh concludes his book with the following thought: "We can enrich one another's spiritual lives, but there is no need to alienate people from their ancestors and their values. ... True understanding comes from true practice. Understanding and love are values that transcend all dogma."

This continual commitment to increase our nuclear arsenal has economic ramifications, as well. Since the dawning of the Nuclear Age, our government has spent trillions of dollars on nuclear weapons systems. Our government claims we do not have enough money to meet basic human needs because it has chosen to spend such funds on preparations for war. Society blames the immigrant, the homeless person and the outcast for our lack of funds. As the Welfare Reform Act takes effect, it is the poor and disenfranchised of our society who have been chosen to bear the burden of our greed. In reality, the cause of our woes is this nuclear madness and the violence which we perpetrate. In light of the recent war against Serbs and Kosovars alike, it is essential that all religious traditions join together in finding a way to abolish war from the face of the earth.

**Chris Montesano**  
Nevada Desert Experience  
Las Vegas, NV

## Living in debt

I FOUND THE ISSUE ON 'LIVING IN DEBT' to be particularly relevant to my own life as my wife and I have already begun to embrace the principles of voluntary simplicity. We're enjoying living within our means and the freedom that goes along with not having our values shaped by commercialism and pop culture. We believe that a simple lifestyle not only strengthens our financial well-being but also enhances our quality of family life and sense of connectedness to the environment. The profile of Bill McKibben was excellent and his ideas on restoring some semblance of proportionality to Christmas really hit the mark. Christmas should be more

Letters

about self-reflection and renewal and less about spending large amounts of money at shopping malls.

**Paul Winters**  
Framingham, MA

IN RESPONSE TO SEPT. '99 ISSUE'S article where Bill McKibben states the only way to combat it (watching TV) — "to get them [out] in the woods...lakes and the mountains." While those older and disabled can and should do nature activity, many can't, due to inaccessibility or physical disabilities. This one solution to the world's problems is partial. Why can't other solutions be reading, writing a diary, limiting TV use, playing music, having pets?

It limits freedom if everyone has to follow the same "solution." We'll be no more free than feeling we "must" watch TV.

**Jan McKown**  
Haysville, KS

P.S. Kansas does not have many lakes or mountains.

### Witness praise

YOUR WONDERFUL JOURNAL REPRESENTS American Anglicanism at its best.

**Rev. Magee**  
Cashmere, WA

### Renewing

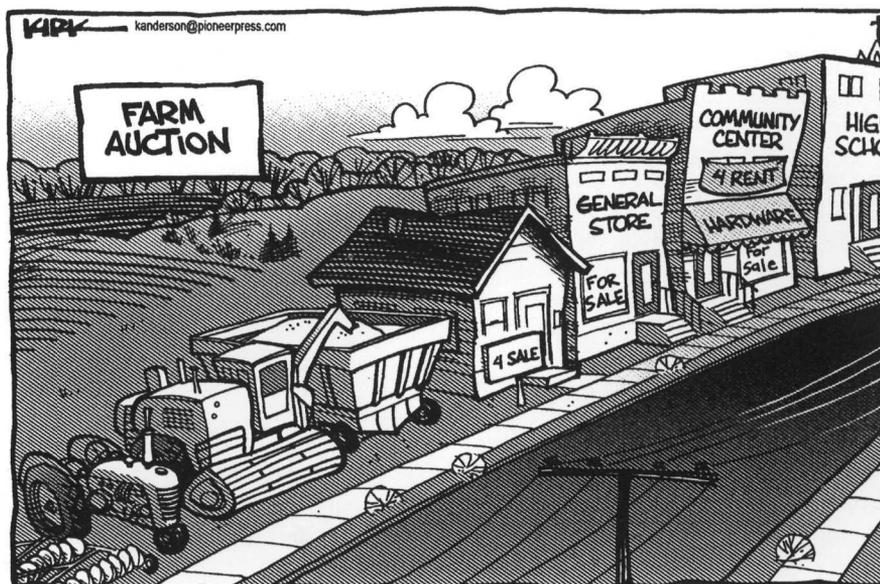
YOUR MAGAZINE AND THE TOPICS covered are very relevant to my life and I read each copy cover to cover and then share copies with my UCC minister, Jim Link, who has trouble dealing with all the needs and problems of his parishioners in our inner city church, St. Paul's Community Church.

Please renew my subscription when my current one runs out.

**Mary Kiefer**  
Cleveland, OH

### Renewing with reluctance

I'M RENEWING WITH A LITTLE BIT of reluctance. My reluctance is that *The Witness* seems to have, over time, drifted — perhaps unwittingly — into a land of cultural explication of the major issues of the day. This, as opposed to a solid political and economic



analysis which, I think, characterized *The Witness* previously and made her distinctive. I think definitely that we are on the edge of a new "kairos" in the political and economic arenas. We certainly feel this in Los Angeles because of recent involvements here, inter-faith and multiracial. I think the church must

avoid what I sometimes think is an East Coast "ennui" — a tiredness of spirit. On the contrary, our mood here — which we think is catching on elsewhere — is *Adelante!* And, *Venceremos* (We shall overcome).

**Dick Gillett**  
Pasadena, CA

## Classifieds

### Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 2000-2001 year. Contact: EUIP, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301; 310-674-7700; email euip@pacbell.net.

### Order of Jonathan Daniels

A prophetic religious community in the Anglican tradition of dispersed Vowed and Oblate members of both genders, single, committed, and married; living, working, and ministering in the world. OJD, P.O. Box 4372, Portland, ME 04101; <OrdJonDan@aol.com>.

### Scripture Conference at CDSP

Jan. 20-22, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. will sponsor

*Healing Leaves: The Authority of the Bible for Anglicans Today.* The conference will take a close look at the role scripture plays in the life of the Anglican Communion. Presenters will offer a perspective from southern Africa, examine the effect of increasing diversity on interpretation, learn what the Bible says about the nature of work, and explore how we can see the Bible as a source of hope.

Jan. 18-19, CDSP will also offer a pre-conference class. Lectures will review the role of scripture in the Anglican tradition, the dialogue of scriptures with other traditions, and issues of biblical authority emerging from the 1998 Lambeth Conference. For more information or a registration form, call 800-353-CDSP.

### Classifieds

*Witness* classified cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is two months prior to publication.

# The Witness

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Co-editor/publisher Julie A. Wortman  
Co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann  
Assistant Editor Marianne Arbogast  
Staff Writer Camille Colatosti  
Magazine Production Maria Catalfio  
Review Editor Bill Wylie-Kellermann  
Poetry Editor Gloria House  
Controller Roger Dage  
Development/marketing Wes Todd  
Office Support Patricia Kolon,  
Beth O'Hara-Fisher, Mary Carter

## 8 'Red thread'— a cry of hope by Jennifer Atlee

*Returning to the U.S. after years in Nicaragua, Atlee says she was depleted. It took her two years to write it down — the beauty, the people who were killed, the people who, above all else, knew love and hope.*

## 12 Disassembling apartheid: an interview with David Goodman by Edie Bird

*Journalist Goodman says he was skeptical of the South African Truth Commission's work, but has now come to value it.*

## 16 'Professionals don't cry' by Rachel Naomi Remen

*Remen trained as a regular doctor. In her first exchange with parents whose youngster had died, she sobbed. Criticized by an older student, she became stoic. Now, years later, she teaches students the importance of grieving.*

## 18 Fighting evil 'down under' by Camille Colatosti

*Working with hundreds of people who have been traumatized, counselors in Australia are trying to help them recover.*

## 23 'A cave with no exit' by Mitsuye Yamada

*When Yamada travels to Okinawa, she is shocked to discover that many Okinawans were persuaded to commit mass suicide when the Americans landed during World War II.*

*Cover: The Storyteller: Encircling and empowering by Mary Beckman. Beckman lives in Boulder, Colo.*

*Back cover: Sisyphus sleeping by Michael Bergt. Bergt lives in Santa Fe, N.M.*

Since 1917, *The Witness* has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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.

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872.  
Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.  
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.  
Website: <www.thewitness.org>.

# Evil is real; God is crucial

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

So, people die. People don't recover. People keep dying. Does it last forever? Do they bounce back? Time pushes on. People's lives get lost. Evil is real.

Jenny Atlee wrote a beautiful poem about abandoned people who get collected in the lap of a large woman — sort of a Mama Goddess, an African-American woman — who holds them all, rocking them in her lap. She says they will be alright, *if and when* others touch them. It is time to say we are sorry. To apologize.

So, we look in her lap and there are thousands — Nicaraguans, Vietnamese, Laotians, Ethiopians, Holocaust victims, Palestinians. People alone. People without hope. Victims from the crusades, the Inquisitions, the witch hunts here and abroad, gay-bashing and racism.

So, what gives us hope? What makes us believe that evil can be redeemed?

In this issue, we have people who are being saved from damage, from great injury. Turning up their eyes, what do they see? What hope is out there for them? For us?

It was hard deciding which peoples to include in this issue. No shortage of horror to consider. Edie Bird interviews a man who has just finished a book on South Africa. Despite his own reluctance, David Goodman was converted to the value of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The big-

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Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>. Artist Constance Keith Alford lives in Mississippi.



*Night of Miracles and Wonder* by Constance K. Alford

gest advantage being that everyone experienced the truth and, for many, healing could begin. What's past has been agreed upon.

Mitsuye Yamada writes about Okinawans who, during World War II, were persuaded to kill themselves in beach-front caves. The Okinawans, she realized, were a wave erected between the Allies and the Japanese. A few Okinawans survived by surrendering to Hawaiians, one of whom could speak a facsimile of their own language.

This issue is dedicated to people whose life circumstances are dire. And the question, naturally, is *can* they find

alternatives? Can they find a place for themselves in the lap of the Mama Goddess who will hold them close until they are touched? Or is there somewhere else they can sit?

Offered in prayer, this issue is dedicated to all who feel anxious, to all who have borne the brunt of unmitigated evil, to those who have suffered and wondered if it will ever stop, to those who might rather be dead than alive.

But, as some of the articles will demonstrate, there *is* room for hope.

Rachel Naomi Remen writes here that, in counseling burned-out professionals, none have ever come in saying, "Oh my God, I am so burned out!" Instead they say, "Something must be wrong with me!! I don't feel anything anymore." Likewise, Jenny Atlee and her friend, a nun, write about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (And you'll note they are not the only ones.) Whether we are the victims of torture or the witness who listens, we are vulnerable to traumatic shock. And, at a certain point, the pain and charred-feeling can seem too overwhelming.

Sometimes only being with a witness, calling on friends, pulling up your own inarticulate prayers or a timeless moment — under a tree, by a creek, in a breeze — can begin to offer healing.

So, here's to truth, to grieving, to sympathetic witnesses and, most importantly, to faith. **TW**

*editor's note*

# The funeral — an unlikely speaker

by Marsha Arons

The dirt was wet because it had been raining the morning of the funeral. The mourners wore boots and picked their way carefully from their cars across the carpet that was laid out alongside the newly dug grave. Isaac Ross was very old, in his 90s certainly. And he had been in excellent health until the morning of his death. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren would have wonderful memories of a vibrant, kind, loving man who enjoyed his life, his friends, family and work. No one could ask more of life than that.

I looked around at the sea of faces who had come to say good-bye to this man. The family was very large and covered all ages. Ross had had many children, and each of them had had many children. All of them had come to say good-bye. One man, seated in the first row closest to the coffin, looked to be in his mid-60s. His hair was completely white, but his face was marvelously unlined.

Instead of the typical eulogy, he told us this story: “If Isaac Ross had been only a loving husband to my mother and a kind-hearted father to me, it would have been more than we could have asked for.

“In 1944, in Auschwitz, a young Polish Jew, Esther Lewandowski, was brutally raped by a Nazi officer. She was 13 years old. What was unusual about this act was that the officer allowed her to live. Indeed, he forced her to come to him several times until he left suddenly after a few months. He had no idea that the young Jewess whose life he neglected to take would have a reminder of his cold-hearted use of her other than painful

memories. The reminder was an infant son. Esther’s childish figure and the starvation rations in the camp enabled her to hide her pregnancy. Indeed, it was common for women to stop menstruating in those conditions, so it was possible that Esther did not even know for sure she was pregnant. Of course, if it had become known, she would have been put to death immediately.

“That was in January of 1945. Sometime in March, as the Germans became

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*“I am Esther’s son by the Nazi officer. But Isaac Ross was my father.”*

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more and more aware that they were losing the war, Esther was part of a unit of women who were taken to work in a factory near Parsnitz. The truck in which they were riding stopped suddenly when the air raid siren sounded. All the guards ran off and the women escaped. They hid in the countryside on an abandoned farm until they were liberated by the Russians in May. The older women helped Esther through her pregnancy, and they all were sent to a refugee camp together. There Esther’s baby was born in September. Esther Lewandowski was 14 years old.

“Isaac Ross had also survived the war, after spending time in a camp. At the time of the liberation, he was 25. He had lost a wife and a daughter as well as his parents and two brothers. After the liberation, Isaac arrived in the same refugee camp as Esther. They fell in love and Isaac became a husband and father once more. What the Nazis had taken from him, he now reclaimed for his own — a family.

“I am Esther’s son by the Nazi officer. But Isaac Ross was my father in every

sense that matters. He loved me, nurtured me, and gave me an identity I could cherish. More important, he loved my mother with all his heart.

“Esther never had any other children. Perhaps to Isaac, she was only a child herself. She died in his arms when I was 12. My father and I leaned on each other in our grief. I knew that my father’s heart was too big not to find others to love, so when he met Anna four years later, I was glad to see him fulfilled and happy. And at 17, I became big brother to the beginning of Isaac’s third family.

“As I stand before you all, our numbers have grown. Isaac had eight children. His grandchildren number 30. And it remains to be seen how many great-grandchildren will come from Ross’s line. But one thing I do know: I am living proof of one man’s triumph over the most heinous evil that ever walked the earth.

“Good-bye, Isaac, my father. We will be your legacy.”

The rain began falling just as Isaac’s son finished speaking. It fell softly at first. The mourners filed by after the coffin was lowered into the grave. They each dropped fistfuls of dirt on the coffin.

One little girl, about 5, was among the last of the family to approach the grave. She approached Isaac’s son, took his hand and said, “Help me, Grandpa.” She picked up a fistful of dirt and turned toward the open grave. I noticed how the brightness of her yellow curls contrasted sharply with the olive green of her coat and hat. She stopped at the side of the grave and looked up at the gray sky. For just a moment, the raindrops mixed with the teardrops on her face, and I suppose on mine too.

And then it struck me: From one seed of evil, a family — beautiful, loving, thriving and Jewish — was growing. This little girl and the rest of Isaac Ross’s family represented the ultimate vindication — the promise for the future. **TW**

---

**Marsha Arons** is a writer and speaker who lives in Skokie, Ill.

## Mandela Comes to Motown

by Hilda Vest

We had stopped singing  
our voices drowned  
beneath the pained bridge of despair

We had settled for synthesized blues  
and unrebelling saxophones  
Even slave songs lost refrain

We had stopped singing  
until you came  
and we saw that you still dance

— from *Sorrow's End*,  
Broadside Press, 1993

The logo for Poetry magazine, featuring the word "Poetry" in a white, cursive script font. The text is set against a dark, rectangular background. A thin white line extends from the top right of the word, curving upwards and then downwards to end in a small dot. Another thin white line extends from the bottom of the word, curving downwards and ending in a small dot.

# 'Red thread'— a cry of hope

by Jennifer Atlee

*Jennifer Atlee (and her partner Tom Loudon) worked with Witness for Peace in Nicaragua from 1984-86 documenting human rights abuses committed by the U.S.-sponsored contra forces. In 1987 they went to work with the "Proyecto Cristo Rey," an integral development project of the parish of Bocana de Paiwas, where they worked with war refugees in 12 resettlement areas. Although the refugees fled their homes hoping to escape contra violence, they continued to be attacked by contra forces.*

*From 1991-93 Atlee worked as an apprentice to a healer in the Clinic of Natural Medicine and Acupuncture of Achuapa, Nicaragua. It was in this setting that she began to explore the effects of war trauma and the healing potential of medicine which integrates care for the mind, body, soul and the earth. She then served as the coordinator for PRO-NICA, a Quaker project which supports development projects in Nicaragua. Currently she is working for the American Friends Service Committee.*

*Now aged 37, Atlee has two daughters 11 and 2, Carmen and Olivia. Living outside Philadelphia, the family currently stays in a lower middle class neighborhood, on the border of a wooded Indian burial ground.*

*During her search for healing, Atlee says working on a book-length manuscript about her experiences was key, but so was access to nature.*

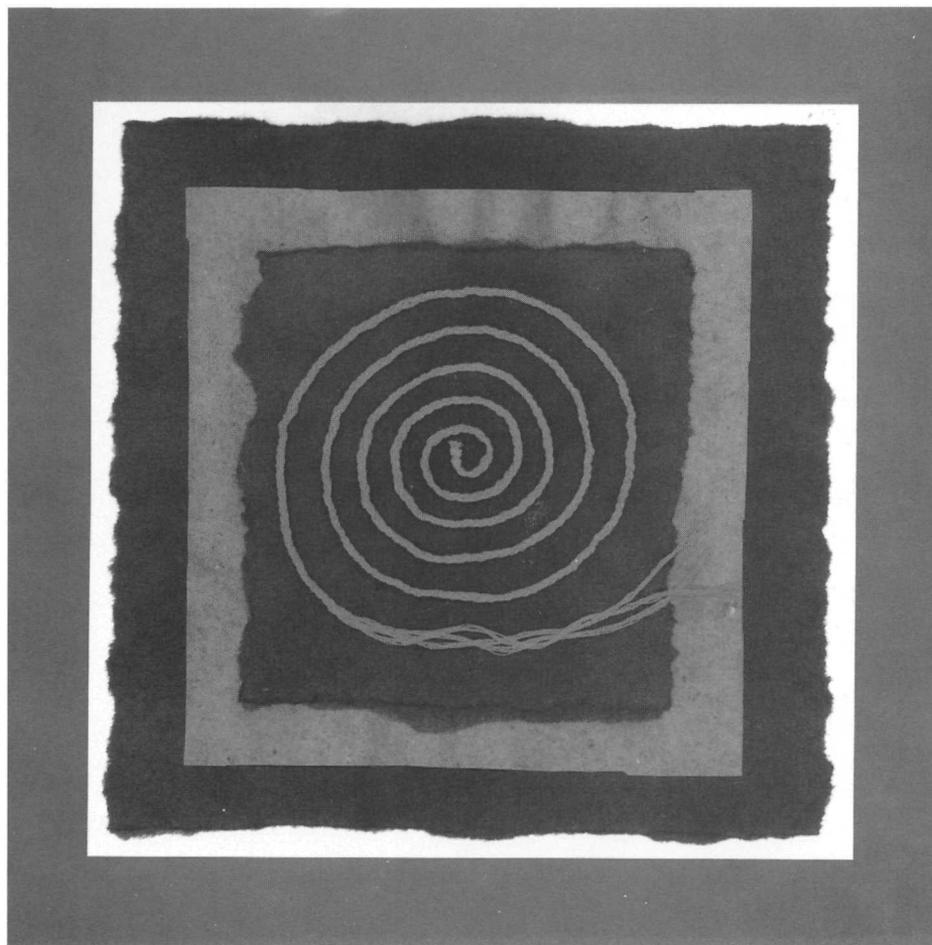
*"I used to hear voices say things like, 'Go sit under a tree,'" Atlee says. "So, I would go until I found the right tree and sit."*

**I** returned to the U.S. after 11 years of working with victims of war and rural *Campesinos* in Nicaragua in 1995. I came back because I had nothing left to give. I was dried up and dying inside. The injustice and evil which had been heaped upon the people of Nicaragua in those 11 years had overwhelmed my spirit. The contra war which my country had financed and promoted with a crazed vengeance had slashed the moorings of my soul and set me adrift in a

desolate wasteland in which I could detect no hope, meaning or purpose in life.

My return was guided by instinct, like that of a wild animal that leaves its pack in order to die alone. I climbed into the silent darkness of solitude and northern winter, rolling a stone across the mouth of my cave, so no one and nothing more of the world could come in. I wanted to sleep and never wake up.

But the stone could not keep the memories out. They seeped in through crevices and welled up from the earth. They came to me in the cave — memories, faces, spirits, the dead. There was no escaping them. So I surrendered. I listened. I remembered. I cried and with my tears,



Reprinted with permission from *Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas* illustrated by Jan L. Richardson (United Church Press, 1998).

honored what had been desecrated. They showed me why I was dying and they told me I was going to have to live again.

They showed me that life is a sacred fabric into which we are all woven. Each of us is a thread inextricably linked to all others. War rips a gaping hole into this fabric, cutting deeply into the being of those who endure or witness it. It also cuts deeply into those who perpetuate it. War desecrates what is sacred.

During the decade of the 1980s, history wrapped my life into the lives of the Nicaraguans with whom I lived and worked like a richly entwined braid. The war slashed at this cord, severing friend after friend after friend. The places where their lives had been so gently pulled into mine were cut off — leaving crudely protruding stumps of frayed ganglia.

The task for me was to begin the mending — to reach back into the severed places in myself and reconnect with what was lost. To gather the loose and gnarled threads and begin to touch them, run my hands over them, lay them straight again, generate new strands to attach to what was left of the old.

Slowly mending holes, Spider came and showed me how to work like her — to spin new thread out of myself. The future lies inside of us. She said, “Spin out the pain, grief, rage and despair. Spin it out until new thread starts to come — clear, strong and healed with which we can weave anew the sacred fabric.”

In 1988, I spent the year working for the Guatemalan Church in Exile based in Managua. I was pregnant and could not keep up with the physical demands of my work in the northern war zones. During that year, as invisible hands knit a child in my womb, I sat in front of a computer translating the testimonies of Guatemalan victims of military repression. Their stories were brutal, grisly and endless. During that year a stream of horror be-

yond belief entered my ears through tapes gathered by priests working clandestinely in the Sierra and Highlands of Guatemala. Day after day, I strained to hear soft voices, telling unthinkable stories on crude recordings. I rewound over and over, careful to catch every word, every detail, and to work their stories onto paper, into English and out into the world.

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*Each of us is a thread  
inextricably linked to all  
others. War rips a gaping  
hole into this fabric, cutting  
deeply into the being of those  
who endure or witness it.*

---

In retrospect, I realize that the life being spun in my womb provided a balance to the atrocities which were spinning in my head. This balance must be maintained in order to survive. New thread is spun even as the weaving is being unraveled and destroyed. The Guatema-

lan women knew this. In the midst of exile and genocide, the women had one constant request: Red Thread. They needed red thread. Vibrant Mayan Red. Color of blood. Color of life. Even as their people, culture, and souls were being massacred, the women needed red thread. They had to keep weaving.

The memory of those women sustained me as day after day I sat in silence, a candle burning to light my way, with journals, photos, memories, sorrows and joys strewn about me like the thousands of bits of colored fabric which my grandmother would piece together one by one and sew into quilts. My thread was bloodied and stained, coiled tightly inside my womb. They encouraged me to coax it out gently, until little by little it would come pulling up memories, faces, pain, fear . . . but above all great love. They inspired me to keep spinning until I got to the red thread.

I am not the same person I was when I first set foot on Nicaraguan soil in 1984. I have changed. At times I hardly recognize myself or what has happened to me.

## *Recovering through soul work*

A friend of mine is a Sister of St. Joseph — we worked together in Nicaragua. She was the first person in WFP to diagnose herself as having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and to tell the rest of us what it was.

Jean offers hospitality to sisters in her congregation who have been victims of political violence. She says the pattern is the same — they seem to be not present/checked out; they will try to harm themselves physically, have nightmares, are obsessed with past events, have eating disorders. Synapses in the brain are actually severed by the trauma. They can be regenerated, but they need

help. What helps them recover is soul work: centering prayer, holding a human hand, stillness, quiet, beauty, nature, music, all of this helps to reconnect severed threads.

“I watch these women heal,” Jean says. “I watch them overcome what evil has done to them. And I think that this work — of healing human evil — is linked to the evolution of the human species. If we can heal it, reclaim its victims, not let it internalize — not let it pass unconsciously from generation to generation — then we are evolving. We are reclaiming our souls — reclaiming sacred space.” — J.A.

# Being with those in pain

*THE RED CROSS WOKE JENNY Atlee to tell her that the asentamiento [settlement] at San Andres had been attacked (May, 1987). The Red Cross was leaving in an hour and would come back for WFP folks.*

I sat on the edge of my bed, pulling on jeans, trying to imagine how things could change so drastically from one moment to the next. Diana and I had just been there. Spirits were high because all of the wood had been cut to build 30 houses.

As I reviewed events in my mind, the sickening realization came over me that the timing was not a coincidence. The contra had been waiting for us to get all the wood cut, stacked and inventoried — so they could come and burn it all down. It was calculated, perfectly planned, so that their message would not be lost on anyone.”

*On Atlee's mirror hung a bag of animal crackers, hung there for Robertito — a 4-year-old with whom Atlee had fallen in love. Atlee knew it was hard enough to be in an asentamiento, but to be there without a man is especially hard and the contra had killed Robertito's father back at their mountain home while Maria, his mother, was still pregnant.*

The women crowd around us, smiling, holding onto us, telling us what happened. They said the contra started yelling at them from the hills:

“Why are you living in this Sandinista asentamiento?” They told the women to come to them if they wanted to be spared. A few women started running toward them, most fled to the mountains to hide. The contra were firing on them, yelling, “Next time we'll kill you all.”

We make our way to the school which somehow survived the attack. I step from the bright sunlight into the darkened room. At first I can see nothing, my eyes still not adjusted to the darkness. Then the scene begins to emerge. Five of the cooperative's mem-

bers' bodies lie over planks of charred wood which were supposed to be for their houses. Women and children are gathered around each of them. Adela stands at the head of her husband, a naked baby on her hip reaching for a lock of his father's hair. Children's hands on lifeless bodies. They are not protected from any of it. They touch death, feel it, trying to understand. My eyes travel around the room, taking it all in.

Then I see Maria. My eyes stop on her. My gut clenches and I cover my mouth to silence the yell that wells up in me. Robertito is lying on a plank at her side, wrapped in swaddling.

No, my God. Not Robertito. He is only 4 years old. He is the only thing Maria has left alive. He is a baby. He is a beautiful, little, round baby. You DO NOT kill babies. YOU DO NOT. I want to wrap my hands tightly around the neck of the contra and squeeze this into them, YOU DO NOT KILL.

I make my way over to Maria. She is still. So still. I kneel down at her feet and lay my hands on her lap. Her stillness seeps into me, quieting me. She says she was running away with him and they shot him in her arms. I stay with her. I listen to each breath of hers, each breath of mine. Robertito lies beside us. Still. He has no breath. A piece of white cloth fills each nostril. I sit at the foot of the Pieta. Maria and her crucified son.

— J. A.



Robertito (front right) and his mother, Maria (far right). Jenny Atlee is kneeling.

Tom Loudon

I have shed my veil of innocence like a snake sheds its skin — entirely — in one seamless sheath. What lies beneath is an older, weathered, toughened skin. The delicate white veil of my innocence is gone. I will never wear it again.

It is hard to get used to this new skin. I miss the veil and its naiveté, its tenderness, laughter and unspoiled optimism. I miss the way it sparkled and glistened on me like morning dew on a spider web. I miss the comfort of my all powerful God who could part seas, strike people dead, do good and fix everything if I only asked fervently enough. He was shed with the skin.

I am trying to get used to this new skin. It is harder, not dewy and delicate like the other. I would like to climb back into innocence — but it doesn't fit anymore. So I stand in this new skin. I take a long look at myself, trying to understand the change. This skin is slower, more deliberate, hangs heavier — like a cloak. This skin is wiser, darker, deeper. I can pull the sides of this cloak around me when my eyes are sore from seeing too much pain. I can heal in the dark silent folds of its rich fabric. This skin knows that prolonged exposure to evil and misery can kill. This skin knows that the cord which connects me to creator must be kept strong, thick and pulsating with life blood. This skin knows that evil tries to sever that cord. So I stand in this new garment which mystery has woven for me. The cord which connects me to her is strong and full, wrapped safely in the deep folds of my cloak. She must be protected at all cost. She is my power. She is the thick red thread that I have been trying to reach. Color of blood. Color of life.

I am spinning out red thread. But what constantly threatened to undermine me was the fear that this was all pointless —

it didn't matter. This voice would say, "Would you look around you — nobody cares what happened in Nicaragua. Nobody cares. Oliver North is a hero — and makes \$10,000 a pop for talking about American values. Nicaragua is totally forgotten — done and over with. It doesn't matter. So what? People were slaughtered there. That's life — forget it. Get a house and a sports utility vehicle like everybody else."

But something very, very strong met that voice, kept me in my chair, without a job, many days against my will — until the work was done. Always, when I most needed it, a sign would come

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*The first sign came when Ron, my reader, returned a first draft to me. He said, "Jenny, this is like what Rufina Anaya did in El Salvador. Rufina Anaya said, 'They made garbage out of my children, and I am going to make them sacred again.'"*

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that made me understand — Yes, it does matter, it matters deeply. And I would go back into the memories and keep writing.

The first sign came when Ron, my reader, returned a first draft to me. He said, "Jenny, this is like what Rufina Anaya did in El Salvador. Rufina Anaya said, "They made garbage out of my children, and I am going to make them sacred again." I kept writing.

The next sign came in a dream, I saw this huge black woman, sitting on a wooden birthing stool, barefooted, knees stretched wide apart, so that her red gingham skirt hung deeply like a hammock.

Her skirt was full of people and she started talking to me. She said:

*Come close chile and listen to me  
I's so full of the pain of my people  
so, so, full  
of all that gotta change  
of all the things that happened  
God don't forget  
and we ain't movin till every tear is wiped  
dry.*

*Every single tear,  
they all count.  
The human race ain't movin  
till we heal and learn to live right.*

*I got em all in my skirt  
all the cryin ones  
the slavery cryin ones  
the holocaust,  
Hiroshima  
and Salvador  
cryin ones  
the Nam and Nicaragua cryin ones  
the whole trail of tears.  
I'm holin em all in my skirt,  
rockin 'em slow  
they safe with me, they ok  
But they waitin, waitin*

*The people gotta come touch em  
and say sorry  
I am so so sorry  
and mean it with all their heart  
and live so it don't never happen again  
on the face of this earth.  
Now you go  
tell the people to come touch these cryin  
ones.  
(The Cryin Ones, January 27, 1996)*

I was beginning to see a pattern in the signs: Tell the truth. Pull it up. Unbury it. Don't carry it unconsciously. Name what happened — who did what to whom, when and where. Take what has been desecrated and make it sacred again. 

# Disassembling apartheid: an interview with David Goodman

by Edie Bird

*Journalist David Goodman first traveled to South Africa during apartheid. In 1996-1997, he lived in South Africa with his family. He followed the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and interviewed South Africans about the changes that the new democratic regime had brought. His observations are in his book, Fault Lines: Journeys into the New South Africa (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999). Goodman returned to South Africa in June of this year to cover the inauguration of South Africa's second democratically elected president, Thabo Mbeki.*

**Edie Bird:** Apartheid was an evil, unjust system constructed and carried out by ordinary people. How did ordinary people come to support such a system?

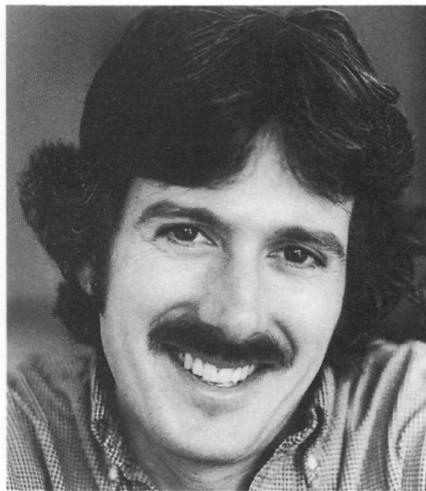
**David Goodman:** I think that's one of the most important questions to understand because when I first went to South Africa in the mid-1980s, I had been involved in the anti-apartheid movement here, and I tended to think in stereotypic ways: good black people, bad white people over there. The reality was more complicated — the white people I met were some of the most hospitable people I met in any of my travels. I became very interested to understand how such good people could get caught up in such bad things.

I think the answer lies in the fact that apartheid works. Apartheid means separateness in Afrikaans. It worked. It succeeded in separating people. Whites were totally ignorant of what blacks were go-

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**Edie Bird** is a writer and priest in Arkansas, <ebird@earthlink.net>.

ing through on a day-to-day basis, the squalor and poverty with which they lived, even though these were their maids and gardeners. But blacks were intimately familiar with white life because they worked in their homes. It was the servants' labor that made South Africa such a comfortable place to live for whites. I



David Goodman

Paul Weinberg

think separation is a key to any kind of system where people dehumanize one another. The less equal contact you have the more you are able to dehumanize. In South Africa's case, whites really portrayed blacks as less than human.

**E.B.:** What about Paul Erasmus, the former policeman you interviewed? What transformed him from an ordinary young man into someone who could torture and even kill people?

**D.G.:** Paul Erasmus is a very complex character, a former policeman and government assassin who is now shattered by many of the deeds he did. He realizes that he spent his life in the service of a lie. He

was just a regular white kid growing up in the suburbs of Johannesburg, a city that looks a lot like New York. But in the 1970s, when he was growing up, blacks only worked in the city as servants.

The crucial thing in the brainwashing of white men was the army. There was mandatory conscription. I think this is something we see repeated in a lot of places, from Israel to South Africa, places in a constant state of war. Perfectly decent young people get caught up in a world where morality is turned on its head, where bad things are encouraged and even rewarded.

South Africans had their own Vietnam in the country of Namibia. They fought a 30-year war.

What Paul Erasmus told me is that it was in Namibia where he killed for the first time. Namibia was basically a lawless place where he was encouraged to torture and kill. And once you have killed, it's easier to kill again. You've broken that taboo. And he was rewarded for it. The more misery Paul Erasmus sowed — in firebombing houses, detaining and harassing people — the more medals he won.

**E.B.:** Did he really believe that he was doing something good, defending his country?

## Saving 'white' civilization

**D.G.:** He believed firmly that what he was doing was to save white Christian civilization. And you have to understand that in South Africa apartheid was a religious crusade, it was sanctioned by the state church, the Dutch Reformed Church, and they lent a religious and moral credibility to this system that was very important. This is a deeply religious country so it was very important to have these moral authorities on the side of the government.

One of the things I went back to see in the late 1990s was a hearing of the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] in which those same church leaders

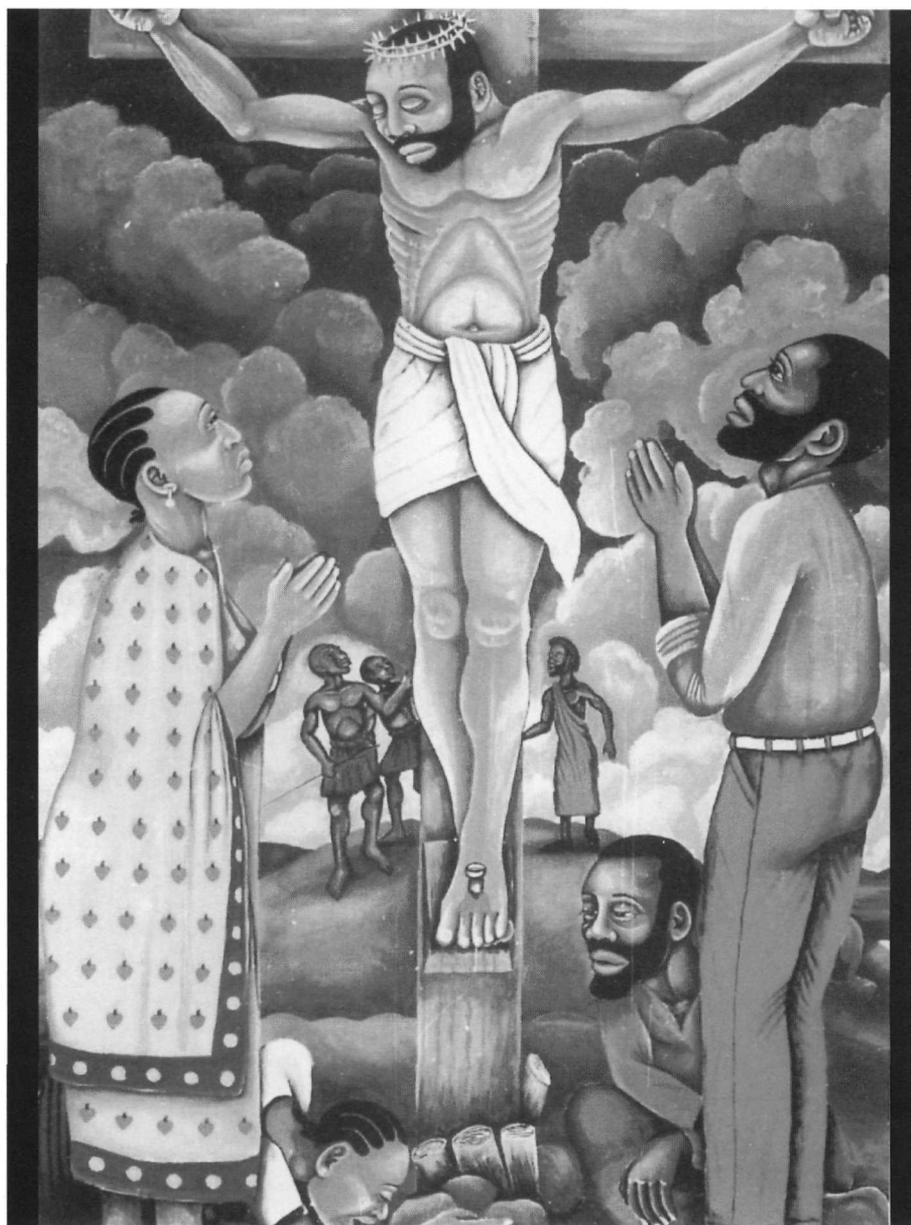
who had condoned apartheid as part of the white Christian's mission on earth, appeared before Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a man they had demonized, and apologized to him. They apologized for the commission of sins in condoning evil and omission — turning a blind eye when this injustice was being done in their name. It was a very moving scene to see them publicly apologize and see Archbishop Tutu embrace each one of them as a gesture of forgiveness. This happened in the town of Stellenbosch, a religious and intellectual cradle of Afrikaaner culture. What Salt Lake City is to the Mormons, Stellenbosch is to the Afrikaaners. It was very significant that the leaders from this community were coming before the TRC.

#### Heartfelt apologies?

**E.B.:** How deep did their repentance go?

**D.G.:** I think the apology they gave was quite heartfelt. I was there with Wilhelm Verwoerd, the grandson of H.F. Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid. These were the people who taught him and who had groomed him to be a leader in the church, and he was watching them now repent of what they had taught him for so many years. From my perspective, it did seem quite honest and sincere. They acknowledged the full weight of the wrong they had committed.

A black clergyman who is a member of the TRC thanked them and then asked them what were they going to do to make amends for their wrongs. And that's where they fell short. Wilhelm was most critical of that failing on their part. There are two sides to atonement — one is acknowledgment of the wrong and the other is reparation, making whole what has been broken. I think that has been an area where whites have not done nearly enough in South Africa. In South Africa almost every white person was a beneficiary of apartheid. While it's fair enough to say



*Christ dies on the cross* by Charles S. Ndege. Ndege painted the stations of the cross on the walls of a church in Tanzania.

*“There are two sides to atonement — one is acknowledgment of the wrong and the other is reparation, making whole what has been broken. I think that has been an area where whites have not done nearly enough in South Africa.”*

*— David Goodman*

that many didn't support it, still when it comes time to really rise to the moment people have to say what they are going to do to make up for all of this. One of the missions of the TRC is to say what kind of reparations should be made. And it's been very difficult.

Many have called for a reparations tax on big businesses. After all, they profited from what was essentially slave labor during apartheid. But that suggestion has not met with a lot of support. There is a lot of giving back to those who were oppressed that needs to be done by the white community. One of the great accomplishments of the TRC is that there is now a rough consensus about what happened in the past. Fifteen years ago, whites in South Africa would simply tell me that there was nothing wrong. They said that blacks were happy in South Africa. There are very few people, in fact no one, who would say that now. There is now an acknowledgment that bad things happened. At least people are reading off the same page in history now.

**E.B.:** In recovering from evil, just getting the truth told would be a strong accomplishment. It seems a system like apartheid can only flourish when the truth is not acknowledged.

#### 'Evil in silence'

**D.G.:** Evil flourishes in silence. One of the greatest achievements of the TRC is to break that silence. When I first arrived in 1996 and began following the TRC around, I was very critical of what I felt was a morally indefensible bargain with the devil: "If you just tell the truth, you go free." But, by the time I left a year later, I had been converted. South Africa gained far more than it lost in this national confession. South Africa did something and has something that very few countries recovering from an authoritarian regime have and that is that they know the truth about what happened in the past. What is

that worth?

Well, compare it to what has happened in Argentina. There, 20 years after the end of the "dirty war" that the military *junta* waged against students and Leftists, you still have the Mothers of the *Plaza de Mayo* marching in silent vigil wondering what happened to their loved ones. In South Africa there will be no Mothers of the *Plaza de Mayo*.

This is not an easy thing to do. The outside world has conjured up a nice image: "Here's a country where everyone has now buried the hatchet and is getting along." It's an incredibly difficult and painful thing, this process of truth and reconciliation. But I think South Africans have kept their eye on a larger goal.

For the current generation, those who were oppressed under apartheid, it may be too much to actually forgive. What they've gained from the TRC for the present and future is the opportunity to break the cycle of violence.

**E.B.:** I'm wondering how this turns things around, where the perpetrators of evil become vulnerable and the victims are powerful because now they have public acknowledgment of the truth.

**D.G.:** I asked Archbishop Tutu about this, "Where is the justice in this situation?" He became very animated and said this is not retributive justice the way many would like to see it done. In South Africa it was imperative that they do more than bring retributive justice.

South Africa has a bigger challenge than just finding out who did what and throwing them in jail. That would be the easy part. Because in these small towns and rural places a lot of people know who did what and they've known it for a long time. You have to go further than that. What you have to do is find a way to get along together and to move forward together. For anybody who doubts the importance of that, take a look at Rwanda or

Northern Ireland where you have intractable conflict. In South Africa you have a sign of hope — a country that has shown that there is another way.

**E.B.:** This process establishes a consensus of truth, as you were saying, and it further discredits apartheid as a system and as an ideological point of view, so that it is no longer an option to defend apartheid morally?

**D.G.:** It's the ultimate vindication of the forces that were fighting apartheid. Not only were they fighting the good fight, but they really did stand for something higher than the violent, greedy small-mindedness that characterized apartheid. The ultimate proof is in their approach to dealing with their tormenters. It has been extremely difficult for me to watch people who were finally getting to confront their neighbors who had killed or harmed their loved ones and they were being asked to forgive. But by and large, if the truth was told, people would say that they did forgive and they wanted to move forward.

There is an incredible spirit in South Africa, a common sense of wanting to make that country work. It had been the pariah of the world for so long and now people do want it to work. It's a wonderful country. But I want people to understand that this is an extraordinary and difficult process. I could not help but put myself in the situations of the people who were testifying, having lost their loved ones, and I don't know if I could forgive the way that they did.

#### Reconciling president

**E.B.:** In your book you call former President Nelson Mandela "the high priest of national reconciliation." How important is leadership in this process?

**D.G.:** It's crucial. Mandela single-mindedly focussed his presidency, which ended in June, on reconciliation. He understood that without reconciliation there could be no discussion of education and

healthcare and the economy. It would all be lost in this never-ending conflict. He led by personal example.

Here was a man who spent more than 27 years in jail and emerged from prison to forgive his tormenters. In so doing, he raised the bar so high in South Africa that it became unacceptable politically and socially to do any less. Because who's to say that they have suffered more than Mandela who had lost almost half of his life in jail. It's a rare thing that a national leader has that kind of moral authority. It has proved incredibly effective and important for South Africa's recovery to have a Mandela.

**E.B.:** Do blacks and whites look at the work of the TRC differently?

**D.G.:** Most whites have not fully acknowledged the effects of apartheid. There is now some sense of common history, but I don't think there is an understanding of what needs to be done to right the wrongs. In fairness, we're talking about a very big challenge to turn that country around. It requires, at a minimum, generosity. To use a stronger word, it requires sacrifice on the part of whites.

The TRC has recommended reparations but they are just token reparations. There needs to be a lot more talk about undoing the damage. Things like affirmative action programs are important, but there needs to be a much more courageous discussion of how whites can help rebuild the country. Many whites are on the sidelines complaining about the loss of privilege. I think they need to be in the center of the process of rebuilding.

#### **Whites forfeit cash?**

**E.B.:** So you think whites need to relinquish some of their economic power in order to enter into a process of true reconciliation?

**D.G.:** It has to be led by the government. I don't think it's something that individual whites can take on by themselves. The government has been slow to take on

that issue because it is an extremely sensitive one. The international financial community does not take kindly to redistribution of wealth and reparation taxes. The national government needs to make a dramatic attempt to redistribute the spoils of apartheid.

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One has in South Africa a  
sense of triumph.”*

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**E.B.:** Are there whites who would support that?

**D.G.:** Absolutely. There are many whites who are very supportive of the changes. In fact, in coming back to South Africa near the beginning of the new millennium, I joked with friends that it was heartwarming to discover that everybody was always against apartheid. Now South Africa is a nation of anti-apartheid activists. But that's telling, because people are ashamed of what happened. And that's important, shame is in order here, and all whites share some of the responsibility for what happened under apartheid.

**E.B.:** Archbishop Tutu has said that TRCs need to be established in many places around the world, not just South Africa. Is

a TRC needed here in the U.S.?

**D.G.:** In the U.S. a lot of lip service is paid to whites and blacks (or any number of ethnic groups) getting along and working together but there isn't a lot of acknowledgment of the kind of oppression and injustice that's gone on in this country — whether we're talking about Native Americans, African Americans or other minority groups who've been stolen from, enslaved or denied opportunities. It would be an incredible thing to see a public acknowledgment of wrongs that have been done, to see the kind of thing we've seen in South Africa. And, to take it a step further, to apologize and speak about repairing what happened.

It's only in the last few years that we've seen national leaders apologize for the internment of Japanese Americans or apologize for the wrongs done to African-American men in the Tuskegee Experiment. How many years have to go by before we acknowledge our wrongs? In South Africa, it's all pretty new. Apartheid was officially implemented in 1948. It would be a great challenge for a country like the U.S. to deal with 500 years of injustice and to deal with it with the forthrightness we've seen in South Africa.

#### **You find hope?**

**E.B.:** You have described South Africa as “the most hopeful place on the planet.” What gives you hope?

**D.G.:** It's the commitment to building a very idealistic alternative to what was in the past, building something better, building a real democracy out of the ashes of apartheid. I'm not saying that South Africans have gotten to the promised land yet. Very few people would say that, but they really are trying very hard.

The sense that one has in South Africa is a sense of triumph. People are trying to rebuild and do the right thing and I find that very inspiring. 

# 'Professionals don't cry'

by Rachel Naomi Remen

One of the most common experiences in the practice of medicine is the experience of loss and disappointment. Physicians typically experience many disappointments every week, from the small nudge of the lab test revealing that a medication is not effective, to the blow of a patient dying. It is a great deal for any caring person to handle. Yet most of this loss remains unacknowledged and ungrieved.

I teach a course now at our local medical school to the first- and second-year students. In one of the evening seminars, we explore our attitudes toward loss, uncover some of the beliefs about loss we inherited from our families, and examine what we do instead of grieving. This is often a rich and deeply moving experience which allows the students to know themselves and each other in different ways.

At the close of one of these evenings, a woman student stood and told me that her class had already been given two lectures on grieving by the department of psychiatry. I had not known this and I apologized, saying that it might have been better to choose another topic for the evening's discussion.

"Oh no," she said. "It was different. They taught us grief theory and how to recognize when our patients are grieving a loss. And be respectful of that. They just didn't say that we would

have anything to grieve."

The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

This sort of denial is no small matter. The way we deal with loss shapes our capacity to be present to life more than anything else. The way we protect ourselves from loss may be the way in which we distance ourselves from life.

Protecting ourselves from loss rather than grieving and healing our losses is one of the major causes of burnout. Very few of the professionals I have treated for burnout actually came in saying that they were burned out. I don't think most of them knew.

The most common thing I've been told is, "There's something wrong with me. I don't care anymore. Terrible things happen in front of me and I feel nothing."

Yet people who really don't care are rarely vulnerable to burnout. Psychopaths don't burn out. There are no burned out tyrants or dictators. Only people who do care can get to this place

of numbness. We burn out not because we don't care but because we don't grieve. We burn out because we have

allowed our hearts to become so filled with loss that we have no room left to care.

The burnout literature talks about the factors which heal burnout: rest, exercise, play, the releasing of unrealistic expectations. In my experience burnout only really begins to heal when people learn how to grieve. Grieving is a way of self-care, the antidote to professionalism. Health professionals don't cry. Unfortunately.

The second day of my internship in pediatrics I went with my senior resident to tell some young parents that the automobile accident from which they had escaped without a scratch had killed their only child. Very new to this doctor thing, when they cried, I had cried with them. After it was over, the senior resident took me aside and told me that I had behaved very unprofessionally.

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"These people were counting on our strength," he said. I had let them down. I took his criticism very much to heart. By the time I myself was senior resident, I hadn't cried in years.

During that year a 2-year-old baby, left unattended for only a moment, drowned in a bathtub. We fought to bring him back but after an hour we had to concede defeat. Taking the intern with me, I went to

tell these parents that we had not been able to save their child. Overwhelmed, they began to sob. After a time, the father

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Rachel Naomi Remen is an M.D. and also a teacher who runs a clinic. This article was excerpted from her book, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, copyright ©1996. Used by permission of Putnam Berkley, a division of Penguin Putnam Inc.

looked at me standing there, strong and silent in my white coat, the shaken intern by my side. "I'm sorry, Doctor," he said. "I'll get ahold of myself in a minute." I remember this man, his face wet with a father's tears, and I think of his apology with shame. Convinced by then that my grief was a useless, self-indulgent waste of time, I had made myself into the sort of a person to whom one could apologize for being in pain.

I remember a rotation on the pediatric service of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. During this rotation we were actually losing a child a day. Every morning we would begin rounds in the autopsy room, talking to the pathologist about the child who died the day before or who was lost during the night, and every morning I would leave the autopsy room and go back to the children's ward telling myself, "Well, on to the next."

This attitude which was so prevalent in my training also happened to be the approach to loss I had learned in my family. The afternoon my 10-week-old kitten was run over, my mother took me to a pet store and bought me another. I was taught at a very early age that if something painful happened, the best thing to do was not to think about it and to get involved with something else. Unfortunately, in medicine, the "something else" I got involved with was often another tragedy.

The bottom line is that grieving is not meant to be of help to any particular patient. You grieve because it's of help to you. It enables you to go forward after loss. It heals you so that you are able to love again. "On to the next" is a denial of a common humanity, an assertion that someone can die in front of us without touching us. It is a rejection of wholeness, of a human connection that is fundamental. It makes no sense at all when you say it out loud. TW



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# Fighting evil ‘down under’

by Camille Colatosti

**K**albe House, located in Brisbane, Australia, is an unassuming structure tucked between a railway station and an elementary school. Yet, each day, counselors there work miracles. Kalbe, translated into English, means “heart.”

“We call our center Kalbe — or Heart — House,” says Chris Lobsinger, assistant coordinator of counseling services. “For we see ourselves as giving people back their hearts.”

Kalbe House is the seat of the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT). Each year, people from more than 20 different countries — people who have suffered trauma and survived torture — come to Kalbe House. Most recently, the majority of these nearly 500 clients a year have come from former Yugoslavian countries, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa.

Kalbe House does more than clinical work, says Lobsinger. “We try to be cross-culturally aware. The people who work here are counselor advocates. We may help with settlement issues. We may help with learning English as a Second Language. We may also provide counseling, depending on whether or not the culture the person is from accepts counseling as an option.”

There are also special programs for

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*Witness* staff writer **Camille Colatosti** is on the English faculty at Detroit College of Business, <colakwik@ix.netcom.com>.

Vietnamese artist **Vo-Dinh** released a series of anti-war images distributed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation during the Vietnam War. Contact **Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma** at <www.qpastt.org.au>.

women and children. A young people’s program, for example, dedicated to those aged 12 to 25, involves outings to beaches, rock climbing, camping and pizza nights. Young refugees experience high risks, and may feel isolated from others. They may have to deal with racism in school; they may have to assume adult roles at home, especially if they have lost parents to torture.

“Children suffer the most,” says Lobsinger, “and there are the fewest resources for them. They need a great deal of attention.”

Doctors, friends, family members and Australia’s Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs refer refugees to Kalbe House. QPASTT is a government program, funded to facilitate the resettlement of refugees. As Lobsinger explains, “The government has demonstrated a real commitment to supporting people who are victims of human rights violations.” Even with government support, however, Kalbe House often feels a crunch. Lobsinger adds, “We could do so much more if we only had the funding.”

A displaced North Dakota native, Lobsinger came to Australia in 1988 to study social work at the University of Queensland. Once there, he became interested in doing what he calls “unbelievably difficult work” — counseling those who have survived trauma and torture. “The work is terrifying and difficult and rewarding — all at the same time.”

Those who survive torture must com-

plete their own “unbelievably difficult work” before they can begin to believe in the future again. “Refugee,” explains Lobsinger, “is a legal definition set up by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. If you are a refugee, this means that you have suffered a great deal. More than 80 percent of refugees suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.”

Psychologists define this disorder as a “persistent re-experience of a horrifying event that would have been markedly distressing to almost anyone.” Those afflicted with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder project the past into the future. “What’s in front seems just as bad as what went behind,” says Lobsinger. “This can be incredibly frightening.” For, as Lobsinger notes, the people he sees in Kalbe House “have been hurt in overwhelming ways.”

Many suffered “direct torture for religious or political beliefs or they have been through war. Over 100 countries in

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and there are the fewest  
resources for them. They need  
a great deal of attention.”*

— *Chris Lobsinger*

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the world still practice torture regularly. This is an increase, not a decrease. Most of us believe that the world is getting more humane, but the reality is that torture is getting

more prevalent.”

Lobsinger notes that recovering from torture may take a lifetime.

“Sometimes we see Dutch people who were prisoners of war during WWII as children.”

The WWII reference is important. As Lobsinger explains, “Lots of us think of the image of the WWII soldier — a prisoner of war tortured by the Nazis until he gives up information. But this kind of torture — torture to gain information — is more the movie version than the reality. The point of most torture isn’t to gain information or to kill the person. It is to



Vo-Dinh

overwhelm a person's ability to cope. Once a person is broken, then he is released back into the community. That person, the survivor of torture, returns home, utterly destroyed. This spreads terror. Torture is used as a political act of control. The survivor is a symbol to the community. The torturer seems to say, "This is what will happen to you if you rebel. So stay passive."

When people become refugees, explains Lobsinger, the situation has become so bad that they really cannot survive in their home countries. "For a refugee, leaving his or her home is a traumatic act. Refugees leave everything behind with very little notice and no planning. They often leave in secrecy and without opportunities that normal migrants have.

"They then flee to countries of first asylum." These are the countries closest to their home — Germany for those from

the former Yugoslavia or the U.S. for those from Central or South America. In this country of first asylum, the refugee tries to get some protection. Some will stay in this country for four or five years.

"Many will languish in refugee camps," says Lobsinger, "and many will not get legal status in that country — ever. There is a lot of damage done just because of process. People wait so long for counseling that they may experience mental illness; they may relive their torture. This is when Post Traumatic Stress Disorder may appear. The refugee may suffer panic attacks or depression.

"Refugees may not be able to trust in the world as a place with good people. They may believe that the world is evil — and they have lots of proof of that. This really changes a person a great deal when you start believing, on a deep level, that the world is evil."

Lobsinger explains that refugees often sit in camps for months or years before going to their second, and often permanent, new country. Leaving their country of first asylum, refugees may be sent to Australia, Canada or the U.S.

"In a country where they will stay," says Lobsinger, "they may feel a sort of euphoria. Then, they may start to slip into depression as the reality of what's been lost and worries about future set in. They may learn that chances of finding employment in their profession are minimal. Even if they were doctors or lawyers in their own country, they may have to be [house cleaners]. A 30-year-old man or woman feels that his or her life is over. They hit rock bottom with a deep sense of culture shock; they may feel that there is no place they belong."

Lobsinger believes that Western culture "may demand too much too quickly.

We expect refugees to learn English right away, even if they are not ready to learn and need more time.”

If they are suffering severely from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, explains Lobsinger, they really cannot learn. “If you are anxious, your ability to learn gets shut right down. You can’t learn until you are feeling safe and better.”

Those who recover and are able to rebuild their lives most successfully are those who, says Lobsinger, “make contacts in the community.” If people have positive experiences in their new country, if they make friends and build links to others, this can turn them around. Then they start to build some hope in the future.

Ideally, says Lobsinger, refugees will see what is good about their past culture and what is good about their new culture. “They realize that the future will be good; it won’t simply be a continuation of their traumatic past.”

### **Therapy and community**

Kalbe House is guided by the philosophy that therapy cannot be successful outside of the community. That is, says Lobsinger, “success in counseling depends on the person’s perception of his or her own connection to a community. If a person sees herself as connected to a community where people like her and value her, then that person is more likely to be successful in recovering. This is important. In fact, the reality of the connection is less important than a person’s perception of that connection. The perception may not be correct. But if a person feels that he or she is supported by a community — family, friends, or even a religious belief — that person may be protected from some of the worst effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.”

Lobsinger tells the success story of a young Salvadoran man who first came to Kalbe House two years ago.

“In El Salvador, this young man, about 25 years old, decided that he did not want

to take sides in the war but that he wanted to help all victims by providing basic health care services to his village,” Lobsinger explains. “He became powerful; both sides trusted him because he cared for children and brought up health standards.

“But, one day, one side of the political faction decided that he was dangerous and set out to kill him. He was traveling on the road with his brother, who served as his bodyguard. The gunman shot and killed the young man’s brother. This young man saw his brother die in his arms.

“After this, his family told him to stay alive and leave the country. He arrived in Australia and was overcome with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. His guilt was unbelievable. He couldn’t get pictures of his dying brother out of his head.”

But his story ends well. “He attended counseling sessions,” says Lobsinger, “and these helped, especially since he was able to tie into the community.” Once he did this, he began to succeed in his English classes and to make progress. Today, he is fluent in English, is working full time in the medical field, is studying to advance as a medical technician, runs a community group and teaches Latin American dance. As Lobsinger explains, “He’s come a long way, from being almost absolutely dead inside to living in the future.”

Lobsinger tells another story: the story of single mothers from Somalia, a country whose Muslim culture differs greatly from that found in the West. “Most of the Somalian women who come to Australia come with children — four or five — after their husbands have been killed,” explains Lobsinger. “They are proud women used to looking after the household in a particular way, and used to a husband who plays a particular role, especially in terms of disciplining young boys. For many of these women, when their sons turn 15 or so, they stop listening to the mother 100 percent of the time.

They are begging for male guidance. Their mothers can’t control them, can’t keep them in school. On top of that, the mothers’ beliefs and culture prevent them from taking on the man’s disciplinarian role.”

Lobsinger adds, “Some of these women suffer greatly in the Western context where the individual is more important than the family and women are expected to do what men do. In their culture, that is not morally correct. They have to struggle to be in a world that they see as evil. They often believe that they are not raising their children correctly.”

### **The evil in all of us**

Lobsinger grows wary as he discusses some of the challenges of his work. The worst is what is termed “vicarious trauma.”

“People who work with those who have suffered great evils may get vicarious trauma as a result of empathic exposure to the clients. If you work here, and don’t take care of yourself, you might get depressed and you may start having nightmares.”

Workers’ “spirituality may be disrupted.” To maintain his own spirituality, and to help his staff deal with what they confront, Lobsinger arranges for people of various religious denominations to come in regularly. “Last week, a Zen Buddhist nun came in to chat with us about meaning and life; good and evil.”

As Lobsinger explains, “When you are working with this kind of trauma, you start to feel that evil is out there. Now, for a while, it was fashionable to stop believing in the notion of evil.” But, since working at Kalbe House, and working with survivors of torture, Lobsinger’s understanding of evil has changed. He has learned that “evil is something that everyone is capable of. This hurts so much that we don’t want to believe it. It is an insult to our personal belief system, our belief that the world is a good place. But it is true. Evil is in all of us and we have to come face-to-face with what that means.”

**TW**

## U.S. weapons in East Timor

"Last year licenses were approved to sell Indonesia almost \$2.5 million in manufacturing and technical assistance, the software, blueprints, instructions and manufacturing rights necessary to make American-designed weapons," reports the Council for a Livable World. "As the current situation in East Timor shows, selling weapons, much less the means to make them, to dictatorial, repressive regimes is a dangerous and often ill-fated activity. M-16-armed soldiers are making East Timor burn, and the U.S. is virtually powerless to stop it.

"Meanwhile, Congress and the 'experts' continue to complain about U.S. nuclear technology being sold to China, but then ignore the export of U.S. conventional weapons technology.

"If these patriotic politicians and commentators were truly concerned with America's security, they would want to crack down on the export of U.S. conventional weapons technology. The reason that they do not could have something to do with the fact that manufacturing and technical assistance licensed over the last three years was worth \$35 billion."

## Right wing: 'Boycott military'

"Thirteen conservative religious groups have called on Christians to boycott joining or re-enlisting in the U.S. Army until it bans witchcraft on its posts," according to an AP report quoted in the Sept./Oct. Issue of *The Door*. The call for a boycott arose out of controversy over a news report of a Wiccan group practicing rituals at Fort Hood in Texas. The army cites freedom of religion in defense of its policy of providing worship space.

"Until the Army withdraws all official support and approval from witchcraft, no Christian should enlist or re-enlist in the Army, and Christian parents should not allow their children to join the Army," said Paul M. Weyrich, president of the Free Congress Association. Groups endorsing the ban include the Christian Coalition, the Traditional Values Coalition, and the

American Family Association.

## Child labor and global debt

Global economics has led to an increase in child labor in South Asia, Vijay Prashad writes in *Dollars and Sense* (9-10/99).

"To finance their foreign debt, many Asian governments, including India, Bangladesh, and Thailand, have, at the behest of international finance and the IMF, bent their economies at all costs to export, earning foreign exchange for the repayment of debt to the richest countries. These export industries have a voracious appetite for cheap labor and in most cases, they rely upon the toil of children.

"In India and other South Asian countries, tens of millions of children are working mostly in export-oriented industries (carpets, diamonds, glassware, footwear) and tourist services (including sex work) owned by local elites. Their labor, then, supports sectors tied to the global economy and is not a remnant of some older, agrarian order. It is a modern business practice, especially within nations committed to fulfilling IMF terms to cutback government programs.

"When Indian economic policy came under the direction of the IMF in 1991, the government slashed social spending — especially subsidies on food, health and education — and made every effort to increase exports. Both policies fueled an epidemic of child labor."

## The psychic cost of violence

Killing other human beings does not come naturally and is learned only at great cost, according to a book reviewed in *Fellowship* magazine (7-8/99). Throughout history, "the majority of men on the battlefield would not attempt to kill the enemy, even to save their own lives or the lives of their friends," Lt. Col. Dave Grossman writes in *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*.

"Grossman, a career military man with degrees in psychology and history, begins with the landmark study of S.L.A. Marshall (Brigadier General)," explains reviewer Laura Hembree. "When investigating firing

rates in WWII, Marshall made an extraordinary discovery: 80 to 85 percent of combat soldiers in firing zones would not fire their rifles. Ardent du Pique's investigations of French soldiers in 1860 came to similar conclusions, as did examinations of the kill rates of the Napoleonic and American Civil wars, and accounts from officers in WWI.

"The Army took Marshall's data seriously. Following WWII, Pavlovian and Skinnerian conditioning techniques became part of a soldier's training. By the Korean war, firing rates had increased from 15 percent to 55 percent; by Vietnam the rate was 90 percent. Soldiers' kill rates increased, but so did their rate of psychic disorder. Suicide and homelessness among veterans skyrocketed.

"Grossman believes that within the human psyche there exists a deep and fundamental revulsion to killing another human, and that we override the revulsion at great cost. He calls for serious scientific inquiry into the social and psychological repercussions of learning to kill."

## Native farmers report bias

Alexander Pires, Jr., an attorney who won a multimillion dollar settlement for black farmers, is encouraging American Indian farmers to join a lawsuit charging the U.S. Department of Agriculture with discrimination. "Black farmers filed the lawsuit more than two years ago because they had been denied access to government loans and subsidies," *Honor Digest* reports. "Tribes also say American Indians have been denied USDA loans and while non-Indian farmers' loans have been restructured up to five times, Indian farmers' loans have not."

shoot takes

# The Cambridge Accord

On Friday, October 1, 1999, Steven Charleston, President and Dean of Episcopal Divinity School and former Bishop of Alaska, published "The Cambridge Accord." The Accord is intended as an international response to increased violence against homosexual persons around the world. Of special concern are recent developments in the African nations of Uganda, Kenya, and Zimbabwe where the presidents of these nations have publicly cited biblical sanction for labeling homosexuals "un-African" and outside the law. In Uganda, the President has ordered the arrest and trial of all homosexuals, with a possible term of life imprisonment if convicted. President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has publicly characterized homosexuals as "lower than pigs and dogs."

The Cambridge Accord seeks to respond to this kind of pogrom against homosexuals by clarifying the Anglican position through a shared statement by the bishops of the church. The Accord invites every bishop to agree to this basic declaration of human rights. In creating the Cambridge Accord, Charleston hopes to find common

ground for Anglicans to stand together to prevent acts of violence against homosexual persons, especially when these acts are vindicated on a biblical basis.

"After Lambeth," Charleston says, "I am also acutely aware of the uniquely Anglican need to make such a public



Coptic textile design

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*"If we are successful with this simple effort, perhaps we can save innocent lives while the dialogue on homosexuality continues in peace and goodwill."*

— Steven Charleston

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statement. The African nations that are currently in the spotlight are all strong areas for our Communion. Their bishops need our support in resisting this kind of misuse of the Christian faith." Copies of the Accord have been sent to both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal

Church in the U.S., along with the Primate of Canada and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, with an appeal that these bishops assist in circulating it throughout the Communion.

"If we are successful with this simple effort," says Charleston, "perhaps we can save innocent lives while the dialogue on homosexuality continues in peace and goodwill."

## The Cambridge Accord

In the name of God, we, the bishops of the Anglican Communion who have affixed our names to this Accord, publish it as a statement of our shared opinion in regard to all persons who are homosexual. We affirm that while we may have contrasting views on the Biblical, theological, and moral issues surrounding homosexuality, on these three points we are in one Accord:

1. That no homosexual person should ever be deprived of liberty, personal property, or civil rights because of his or her sexual orientation.

2. That all acts of violence, oppression, and degradation against homosexual persons are wrong and cannot be sanctioned by an appeal to the Christian faith.

3. That every human being is created equal in the eyes of God and therefore

deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

We appeal to people of good conscience from every nation and religious creed to join us in embracing this simple Accord as our global claim to human rights not only for homosexual men and women, but for all God's people. **TW**

*Keeping Watch*

# 'A cave with no exit'

by Mitsuye Yamada

*And from their bases at Ginowan  
the latest weapons of mass murder  
reach up with muzzles poised, awaiting  
orders.*

— Okinawan poet,  
Shiro Yu, "Soshite sengo"  
(*And then came postwar*, 1982)

Colorful rare orchid blossoms lined the wide corridors as we left the jetway and entered the airport at Okinawa. Tropical, just like Hawaii, I thought.

When my brother asked me to accompany him to Okinawa to meet Okinawan human rights activists in December, 1998, I thought the trip would be one of information gathering with the added bonus of a first-time opportunity to visit the home island of my husband's late mother, Nabe Iha.

The trip turned into a personal revelation of great proportions that I never could have imagined. A chance visit to a small museum, the Sakima Art Museum in Ginowan City, opened up a whole new way of looking at my own heritage as a Japanese American Nisei (Second Generation) and my four children's heritage as Okinawan Japanese American Sanseis (Third Generation).

The museum's main exhibit featured murals and paintings of the mass forced suicides of civilian Okinawans in 1945 during one of the most brutal battles in

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**Mitsuye Yamada** is a poet and a member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Co., the board that owns *The Witness*. **Artists Iri and Toshi Maruki** are now creating murals of Okinawa suicides during World War II. Earlier they made paintings of Hiroshima.

World War II, the Battle of Okinawa. The paintings were by the Japanese artists Iri and Toshi Maruki. I remembered seeing reproductions of "The Hiroshima Panels," depicting the human suffering in the aftermath of the atom bomb, by the same husband and wife team and being powerfully moved by them. But they were black and white photographs in the pages of a book. Those reduced reproductions were, no doubt, nothing compared to the actual murals. In the main hall at the Sakima Museum in Okinawa, I stood immobi-

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*After weeks of hunger and  
cold, the villagers in her  
cave, Shimuku gama,  
surrendered to the  
Americans, while everyone  
in the cave right next to them,  
Chibichiri gama, committed  
suicide as they were ordered  
to do by Japanese soldiers.*

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lized in the middle of the room before these monumental murals in full color.

On one side was a huge painting of the exterior of a cave, cold and mute, with the legend that indicated that the people who were in this cave survived. On the other side, a full blown interior of the cave, a mountain of human bodies in different stages of death. Images of suffering of such enormous magnitude pierces you to the core. It was almost too much to bear. I remembered Toshi Maruki's comments regarding

the Hiroshima paintings, that "no painting will ever fully capture the tragedy of Hiroshima . . . The reality is far, far worse."

Similarly, in the Marukis' paintings of the cave deaths, one could feel what one could not see, the smell of death, the urine, the maggots. This was even before I heard the story behind these cave deaths from an Okinawan woman who had survived.

We met Fumiko Naka when we attended her husband's church in Koza City the following day, and she offered to escort us to the caves. Naka was 8 years old during the Battle of Okinawa. The islands had been under siege by U.S. divebombers for months and most of the villages were reduced to rubble. On April 1, 1945, the villagers in Yomiton Son were told that the invasion of the *beigun* (American devils) was about to happen any day and that they must evacuate to the caves. After weeks of hunger and cold, the villagers in her cave, *Shimuku gama*, surrendered to the Americans, while everyone in the cave right next to them, *Chibichiri gama*, committed suicide as they were ordered to do by the Japanese soldiers.

Naka's family and other villagers in their cave were saved, she said, because among them were two young, brave men who somehow persuaded them that the Americans would not torture or kill them. They were *rikai shiteru hito* (people with intelligent understanding) who had spent some time in Hawaii and worked with Americans.

We first went to the *Shimuku gama*. There was a late afternoon drizzle, and it was getting dark. Naka came prepared with umbrellas for each of us and poles to serve as canes on the treacherous, slippery, narrow path. When we reached the cave, it was pitch dark with

only the huge stalactite hanging at the entrance barely visible. We stood at this entrance, listened to the sound of the creek running through the cave as Naka's voice described her literally chilling experience in this cave. She said, "People ask me what I remember of those days. I'm ashamed to talk about this now, but I only remember the hunger. I was so very, very hungry for days and days."

Several weeks later the American soldiers came. One of the young men from Hawaii went out to talk to them and then called back into the cave in "Hogen" (Okinawan language), "Come on out. Come on out." Then she said something that made sense to me only days later. "We came out. We trusted him because he was speaking in Hogen and not in Japanese."

After emerging from the cave, they learned of the mass suicides in the other caves. She said she heard there was so much blood all over because "We didn't have anything to kill ourselves with — except sticks and pieces of clothing. There was a valley of blood because death came very slowly for these people."

The Battle of Okinawa during World War II brought home to the Okinawans the startling fact that Japan considered them dispensable people. They learned later that Okinawa was the "sacrificial stone" (as in the game of go) to delay the Allied invasion of mainland Japan. They thought the Japanese military was there to protect them from the Americans, but finally realized that Japan used the island and its people as the last bastion of defense against the advancing U.S. Marines, and abandoned them to the enemy. When the shooting stopped, the war-ravaged land and people gratefully accepted the rations, medicine and candy from the Americans. They did not realize that by doing

so, their farmers would be forced off their land at bayonet-point and that the U.S. military forces were there to stay, occupying 20 percent of valuable land on their small island. They now feel twice betrayed, by the Japanese and the Americans.

I finally realized why the World War II experience of the Okinawans has had such a profound impact on me. My emotional response to what happened to the Okinawan people during World War II (and even now with the occupation of their land by the U.S. military) was utter paralysis.

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*I am moved to tears over the incomprehensible evil visited upon innocent people during the course of our human history. The term "ethnic cleansing" was not current in the 1940s. Nevertheless, what happened to the Okinawan civilians during the Battle of Okinawa in the last months of World War II was just that.*

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As a Japanese citizen until my 32nd year, and as a naturalized American citizen for now over half of my life, I felt as though I was an accomplice in this horror so vividly displayed by the Marukis. (Although raised and educated in the U.S. since age 3, I was ineligible for naturalization until the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.) There are two warring nationalities in me that have been responsible for acts of unspeakable horror.

My children and grandchildren carry the blood of both the oppressors and the victims.

In the year 2000, my husband and I will be celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary. Not once during the half century of our married life did I suspect that his family was ethnically different from mine.

During the early years of our marriage, I would hear of his mother's frequent visits to Okinawa for family reunions for his grandmother's birthdays, and later to visit her other close relatives just as my mother often visited her relatives in Kyushu. I'd assumed that Okinawa, an island south of Japan, was as much a part of Japan as the island of Kyushu where I was born. Not until this visit to Okinawa did I realize the Okinawans consider themselves and are, in fact, ethnically a different people from the Japanese. It is said the Okinawans bent over backwards trying to become more Japanese than the Japanese. They discarded their language and became ashamed of their own cultural past.

Many of them, including my husband's family that emigrated out of Okinawa to Hawaii, have become a thoroughly colonized people.

Okinawan historians at the University of Ryukus and other scholars remind us that Okinawa was once an independent kingdom with her own language, mythology and culture. Okinawa was absorbed by Japan and became a prefecture in 1879, but even after 120 years of an enforced Japanized educational system that arbitrarily designated them as Japanese, they have always felt that the Japanese treated them like second-class citizens. There is now a movement to recover their original language and heritage.

The urgency with which many Okinawan citizen groups work to rid

themselves of the menacing U.S. military presence and their fervent need to restore their indigenous culture resonate throughout the world. The Puerto Ricans are similarly demanding that the U.S. Navy leave the island of Vieques where Naval training and bombing practice have been going on for decades. Eleven Puerto Rican political prisoners who were recently released through presidential conditional clemency spent 20 years of their lives in U.S. federal prisons for supporting Puerto Rican independence and decolonization of their islands. The East Timorese have recently suffered untold terror and violence for expressing a wish to be independent of Indonesia. The Kanaka Maoli in the state of Hawaii continue to struggle against all odds for the restoration of their mythology and culture. The indigenous peoples, including the American Indians among us, have never stopped trying to protect their environment while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to sacrifice their (and our) environment and health for the sake of progress or national security. Their numbers are growing. They are all pleading in one way or other for “political dignity.”

I am moved to tears over the incomprehensible evil visited upon innocent people during the course of our human history. The term “ethnic cleansing” was not current in the 1940s. Nevertheless, what happened to the Okinawan civilians during the Battle of Okinawa in the last months of World War II was just that. What forces of evil lurk in our world that turned the Japanese young men into beasts for military expediency and preyed on the powerless Okinawans, compelling them to commit suicide by the thousands? To compound this evil of the World War II era, U.S. troops subsequently dominated



Current renditions of the World War II deaths in Okinawa by Iri and Toshi Maruki.

Sakima Art Museum

the life in Okinawa and still remain there to this day. The same members of the military force, who might be good husbands, brothers and fathers back home, become agents of conquest and plunderers.

Our historical reliance on military power supposedly to maintain peace in the world has only succeeded in developing a culture of repressed hostility. Countless examples can be cited of the dangers of government subsumed by the military mentality. The military training system brutalizes normal young men and transforms them into “combat ready soldiers” willing to endure and commit acts of violence. Gwynne Dyer, author of *Anybody's Son Will Do*, describes the military as an

institution so powerful and so subtle that it could quickly reverse the moral training of a lifetime.

It is no wonder that they pose a threat to Okinawan citizens who are surrounded by these troops and their war games every day of their lives. Okinawa is a past and current example of how both Japan and the U.S. combined to subjugate a people, denying them their freedom. We can only hope that with God's help, we can eventually exorcise our society of these evil forces.

*After all these years  
we are still in a cave  
that has no exit.*

Shiro Yu, 1972

TW

# Hell, healing and resistance

by John Bach

*Hell, Healing and Resistance: Veterans Speak* by Daniel Hallock, (Plough, 1998).

There was a story told back in the 1960s about some society whose crops had all gone bad — not bad enough to kill, just bad enough to cause insanity. There was no choice but to eat the crops and hope for the best. The society realized it was necessary to choose a few people who would eat the remaining good provisions so somebody would remember that everyone else had gone crazy — that the norm itself had gone mad.

Honest books about war serve the same purpose.

There's not a whole lot new to say about war, especially when the script is directed by a white, first-world country. We all know what happens. The government lies to its people and manipulations abound. Wars are exported. Men become mercenaries, women become prostitutes, and children become beggars. Minorities and Congressional sons die in disproportionate numbers. Financial markets respond. Everybody agrees that war is hell. Books get writ-

ten.

Most of them are honorable and honest and purport to tell the Truth — which is that war is hell, although “hell” seems too mild a term. But nobody who hasn't been there ever quite gets it, at least not with the clarity and force that such books were intended to convey. The fact that nobody believes this or forgets it so readily or disregards such an obvious truth is one of the great mysteries and tragedies of humankind.

*Hell, Healing and Resistance* is such a book, and one of the best. As its subtitle, *Veterans Speak*, implies, the book is constructed around oral testimonies of folks whose lives have been sculptured by the wars of this most violent century, from World War I to the Persian Gulf. The recitations of suffering in war and betrayals by governments are eloquent and piercing, yet the book is much more than the first person narratives, and this is because of its editor, Daniel Hallock.

Hallock is a superb organizer, obviously a good listener who engendered trust, an astute observer of contemporary war-making, an unapologetic Christian, and a good writer. What he brings most to the men and women of the book, and those of us lucky enough to read it, is an unabashed sense of dedication and caring. He stakes no claim to dispassion or objectivity — much to his credit — and dares to write about how his heart was

affected by what he heard while collecting these stories. The pay-off is that the same thing happens to the reader; the book demands that you think with your heart and guts and not just your educated brain. It's like rubbernecking at the scene of a terrible accident and resolving to pay more attention to the road. It is an antidote to sanitized and bloodless history.

The book was five years in the birthing, the product of over 40 interviews and a hundred personal accounts. Significantly, many of the accounts were recorded in places like soup kitchens, homeless shelters, county jails, death rows — and the settings are themselves an indictment of what war does and how our society responds to the victims. The categories of “veterans” is wisely inclusive: combat veterans, of course, but also women nurses, widows and wives and children of veterans, internment camp prisoners, “enemy” soldiers and civilians, and dissenters within and outside the military.

All the prominent and pertinent, general and specific issues are covered: complicity of the church, the appeals to God, selective silence, the enticement

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*The way to healing, needed by so many of our veterans and by our war-oriented culture, is through resistance to war and to the culture that makes it possible.*

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of comradeship and community under fire, recruiting deceptions, economic conscription, racism and sexism in the military, warborn diseases from Agent Orange and Depleted Uranium, and all the

lies, lies, lies.

Significantly also, the foreword is written by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk, still in exile for his peace-making endeavors. He writes how veterans can provide the voice of authen-

review

**John Bach** is a peace activist living in Gunnison, Colo. He spent 35 months in prison as a draft resister during the Vietnam war.

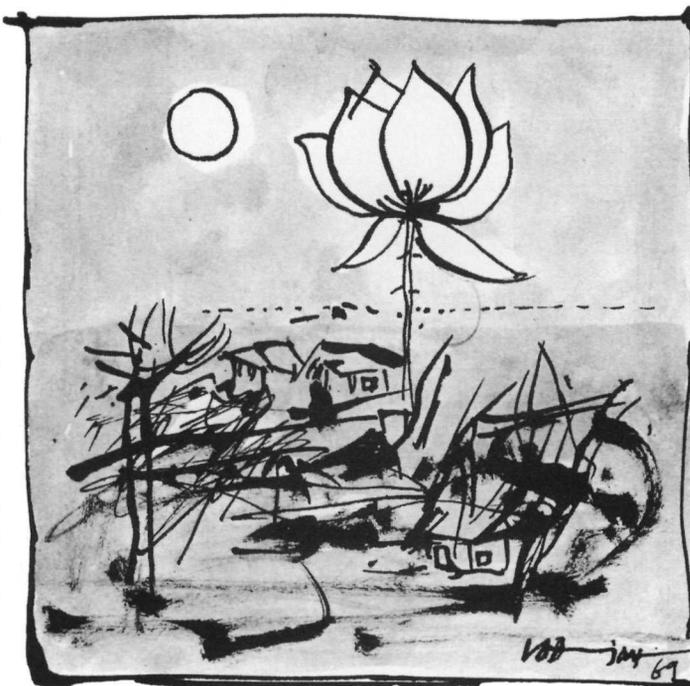
ticity to alert societies about the true nature of war. Philip Berrigan, embodying three decades of stand-up peacemaking and recently out of prison for a Plowshares Action of disarmament, contributes the preface. He writes of his past as a warrior, his conversion to peace, and the need for nonviolent revolution which he sees as synonymous with Christianity.

Much of the veterans' testimony confirms the 1960s' adage that no matter how depraved, vicious and weird you thought things were, they were probably worse. So we learn about the sailors, stoned out of their minds, who lob huge shells from their ship miles off shore into a green jungle country and kill a number of our own Marines. And the Delta Force sharpshooter, taken off his regular job as an assassin of drug lords and Central American revolutionary leaders, to fire upon his own troops in Panama in order to keep them sharp and morale high. We learn, too, that within U.S. prisons religious objectors to WWI were tortured, sometimes to death.

The scope of Hallock's undertaking is immense; it is more of a compendium than a collection. Yet I wish he had included two more categories of "veterans" and given them a chance to speak to us. The Atomic Veterans were the personnel who were experimentally placed facing ground zero during nuclear tests, and who now pay the price with cancer.

And what better way to learn about the nature of war and what it does to the soul of a man or country than to listen to the women who were forced to "service" our service men? The number of

officially sanctioned prostitutes in Vietnam, the conditions of the brothels, the new strains of venereal disease all testify to immediate realities that have little to do with noble concepts like defending freedom. And currently the thousands of women and girls who "comfort" our defenders-of-corporate-America in the Philippines, Europe, and Korea are recruited out of poverty and enslaved economically. The same can be said of the domestic scene around



This image was part of a series by artist Vo-Dinh and distributed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation during the Vietnam war.

any military base.

The book is aptly and hopefully titled. The way to healing, so desperately needed by so many of our veterans and by our war-oriented culture, is through resistance to war and to the culture that makes it possible. And the first step is to speak out. The burden here is not just on veterans, but on all of us. It is also on all of us that healing depends.

Hallock is especially good in writ-

ing about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He reminds us that more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since peace was declared than were killed in the war. He has facilitated veteran retreats, worked to heal families, and speaks knowingly and lovingly of the need to listen to veterans. He writes:

"We need to create 'spaces' in which to share the pain. We need to listen and to understand; most of all, we need to believe them when they cry, 'No more war, ever again!' This is something all of us can do. Sadly, there are so many veterans with PTSD that everyone who reads this book will know at least one. That's a good place to start.

Hallock and the scores of veterans that constructed this book have conferred on us the courage of their opening up, the wisdom of their first-hand experience, and the passion of their insights and pain. We owe them our profound thanks. And as they say, the best way of expressing our gratitude and acknowledging what they went through is to work for peace and social justice.

I write this as our country has started to bomb Iraq again — after a long embargo that has killed half a million Iraqi kids. It is as though our crops have been contaminated, and we've gone insane. This is the book that reminds us. **TW**

### *Moving?*

*Please let us know your change of address!!! Contact us at 313-841-1967 or <[office@thewitness.org](mailto:office@thewitness.org)>.*

**T**wo years ago, Angelique Cooper, then 26 and freshly arrived in Minneapolis after fleeing civil war-ravaged Liberia (by way of Guinea), rarely made it through a night without dreaming of neighbors scattering for shelter under a shower of bullets, of people shot before her eyes, of armed adolescent boys looting once-peaceful suburban homes and shops. During the day, despite determined efforts to suppress a deep rage over seven years of dislocation and loss, she'd find herself greeting commonplace frustrations with explosive anger. Recognizing the possible signs of trauma, the immigration lawyer she'd engaged urged her to get some help. Hesitantly, Cooper agreed to get an appointment at the city's Center for Victims of Torture and Trauma.

"I just wanted to see how to get on with my life," she recalls. "I had become a kind of introvert. I didn't want to talk about what I'd been through. And I was grieving the time I had lost. But always I felt a lot of anger deep down, so things would happen and I'd blow up."

After a battery of diagnostic procedures, the Center's staff set her up with a program of weekly counseling sessions.

"Gradually I opened up and began to talk," Cooper continues. "The doctors offered me a lot of support. They said, 'These bad things have happened to you, but you can still accomplish your goals.'"

Cooper had sought to offer the same counsel to fellow youth in Liberia before

*"For about a month our neighborhood was the front line of fighting. We had no electricity or running water and had to forage for food."*



Angelique Cooper

## Recovering from civil war

by Julie A. Wortman

the fighting forced her to leave the country in 1996. She had entered the University in Monrovia to study sociology and political science in 1992. Together with some fellow students she had helped organize the Liberian Youth Anti-Drug Campaign to raise awareness of the high incidence of drug use among Liberia's young people.

The civil war began in 1989 when Charles Taylor led rebel forces against President Samuel Doe, recounts Cooper, who was 18 at the time. "The war lords drafted teens as combatants. They had a force called the 'SBU' or 'Small Boy Unit' who were placed at checkpoints and were used for fighting." These teens, Cooper says, used drugs to hype themselves up.

"I think the youth in Liberia suffered the most from the civil war," she reflects.

"I wanted to help them, to tell them that if you want to, you can still have your dreams. But for so many of us after so much fighting it was hard to believe you could accomplish anything in Liberia. That was why so many young people turned to drugs."

By this time Cooper's own hope for a bright future had been well tested. Before the war, she had lived a comfortable life in Paynesville, a suburb of Monrovia, where from the age of 9 months she had been raised by her paternal grandparents. She never knew her mother, but saw her father, whose work required he live in another part of the country, monthly.

"I had been sheltered all of my life," Cooper says. "All I had to think about was to get up in the morning and go to school, study my lessons and make good grades."

*Witnesses,  
the quick and the dead*

**Julie A. Wortman** is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>.

Although other members of her family chose to leave the country as Taylor's forces grew more threatening, Cooper and her grandfather, a lawyer, remained at home, her grandfather believing the conflict would not escalate as it did.

"We went from one extreme to the other," Cooper says of the day Taylor's troops entered their community. "For about a month our neighborhood was the front line of fighting. We had no electricity or running water and had to forage for food."

One of Cooper's uncles, who had also remained, was called out of his house by soldiers looking for money. They shot his wife and his young daughter before shooting him. That night Cooper's grandfather suffered a stroke. A week later he, too, died — and Cooper was left on her own, separated from her father and other relatives by the fighting.

When West African peace keepers came to Monrovia to set up a safety zone, Cooper's neighborhood was still in Taylor's hands. As an Americo-Liberian — the same ethnic group as Taylor — Cooper found herself stranded. Doe's followers were largely indigenous African and strongly suspicious that any Americo-Liberian seeking asylum in the safety zone would be a spy. (Liberia was founded in 1821 by the American Colonization Society, which eventually settled about 15,000 freed slaves there. The country became independent in 1847, but the descendants of the freed slaves, called Americo-Liberians, became a powerful minority in the country, ruling the country from about 1880 until 1980.)

Cooper and a handful of people who had worked for her grandfather made their way instead to the Ivory Coast border — a distance of 155 miles they covered on foot. They passed through many checkpoints along the way, each time being stopped for intensive questioning. More often than she likes to remember,

Cooper saw fellow refugees shot for failing the examination.

She was in the Ivory Coast for about three months, until another uncle was able to locate her and bring her to Freetown in Sierra Leone. Here she attended high school for a year before returning to Liberia in 1991, this time to the safety zone in Monrovia. Fighting erupted again in 1992. Eventually, Cooper managed to graduate from high school and enter the university, but her spirits had begun to flag.

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*"Growing up, my grandfather insisted I go to church each Sunday. Then, when the war broke out, we'd say our prayers on a daily basis. And we would read the Bible. I think that is what carried me through, the inner peace I got from the Bible. I realized that I am a child of God and I know God wants what is best for his children."*

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"You would start a process and then everything would be disrupted and you would be back at square one," says Cooper. "I wasn't accomplishing anything."

The anti-drug campaign was an effort to rally support for not giving up. But when the fighting resumed again in 1996, Cooper decided it was time to leave. She went first to Guinea and then to the U.S., where some of her family had already gone.

Looking back on the situation now, Cooper believes that she owes her survival in large part to the strong devotional life her staunch Episcopalian grandpar-

ents had instilled in her as a child.

"Growing up, my grandfather insisted I go to church each Sunday. Then, when the war broke out, we'd say our prayers on a daily basis. And we would read the Bible. I think that is what carried me through, the inner peace I got from the Bible. I realized that I am a child of God and I know God wants what is best for his children."

The trauma of living in the midst of an armed conflict would not be what anyone would call a blessing, Cooper admits, but her sense of God's abiding love has emerged through conflict and makes her believe there was a purpose to her suffering.

"Lying on the floor praying while the bullets were flying overhead, I would ask God why this was happening to me," Cooper says. "Maybe I needed to learn to think for myself. All I know is that I prayed that God would guide me out of Liberia and he did. It wasn't an easy way, but it happened. Everything I prayed for gradually came to me and it has strengthened me."

Today Cooper is living a simple life, attending a community college to get the prerequisites for entering the University of Minnesota next year. She plans to study business management, hoping to start a business of her own, possibly a travel agency, based on work as a travel agent she obtained after coming to the U.S. Slowly, through counseling and prayer, she has begun to escape her nightmares of terrifying violence. She dreams instead of one day returning to Liberia with enough financial resources to resume the anti-drug campaign the civil war forced her to abandon. Her hopes are tinged with realism.

"The civil war taught me that what you have today may be taken tomorrow," she reflects with a touch of sorrow. Then her tone lightens: "But it also taught me how to appreciate life on a higher level." **EW**

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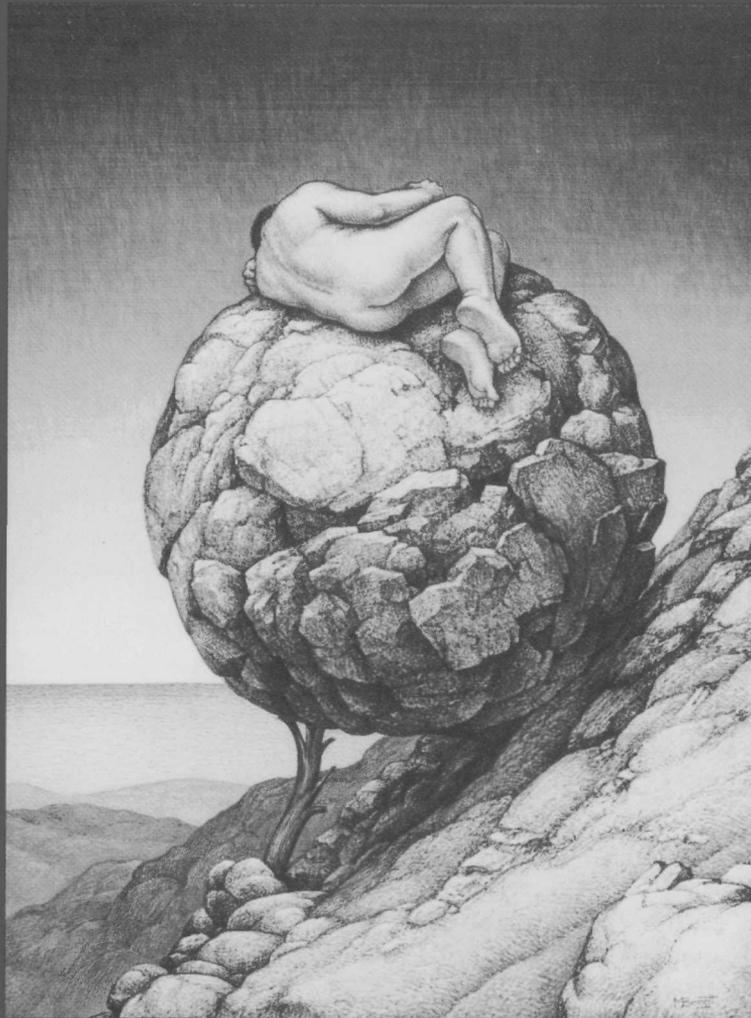
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