



● **CHALLENGING A GREEDY WORLD**

'The People of the Land'

in the Americas

VOLUME 84

NUMBER 1/2

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Kickapoo spokesperson, Cho-ku-qua,
being interviewed by television crew

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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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Moratorium Now

I oppose the death penalty. And I am one of the majority of Americans who in a recent nationwide poll are calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty in this country. More than 1000 groups, including 27 local governments [Atlanta, GA, Baltimore, MD; Detroit, MI; Philadelphia, PA; San Francisco, CA; to name a few], have joined a movement called Moratorium Now and have ratified resolutions calling for a nationwide moratorium. So imagine my disappointment as a Christian when I checked nationally in the Summer/Fall 2000 issue of *Moratorium News* and found only a relative handful of churches involved in this effort. In the three states with the largest death row populations, only eight churches are listed as having passed moratorium resolutions as a part of the Moratorium Now movement.

As Christians we have to do better. We are the leaven called upon by God to mix with the world and transform our society into a better place. As the Body of Christ it is in our hands and it is our obligation to make a difference in this world of ours. Yes, every religious denomination has condemned the death penalty and supports the immediate moratorium on the use of capital punishment in this country. But why hasn't that filtered down to the individual congregations? Why hasn't that filtered down to your church?

I call on every reader of this letter to do two things. First, ask your local congregation to pass a resolution calling for an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and send a copy of this resolution to Moratorium Now. For more information or for sample resolution forms call the Moratorium Now Project at [301] 699-0042, or visit the website at <www.quixote.org/ej>. Second, ask the members of your church to sign the Moratorium 2000 petition sponsored by Religious Organizing Against The Death Penalty. For more information, or for petition forms call [202] 588- 5489 or visit the website at <www.moratorium2000.org>.

Together we can make a difference. Please join us.

Patricia A. Guthrie

Peoria, IL

A Witness nudge

Its publications such as yours that keep me committed to Christianity. Your emphasis on tolerance, understanding and concern, combined with a call to action, occasionally nudges me out of my complacency and/or cynicism, and makes me aware that if good things are to replace the poverty, injustice and hatred so often encountered in my own small world, I have to be willing to do my part.

Patricia Heck

Sewanee, TN

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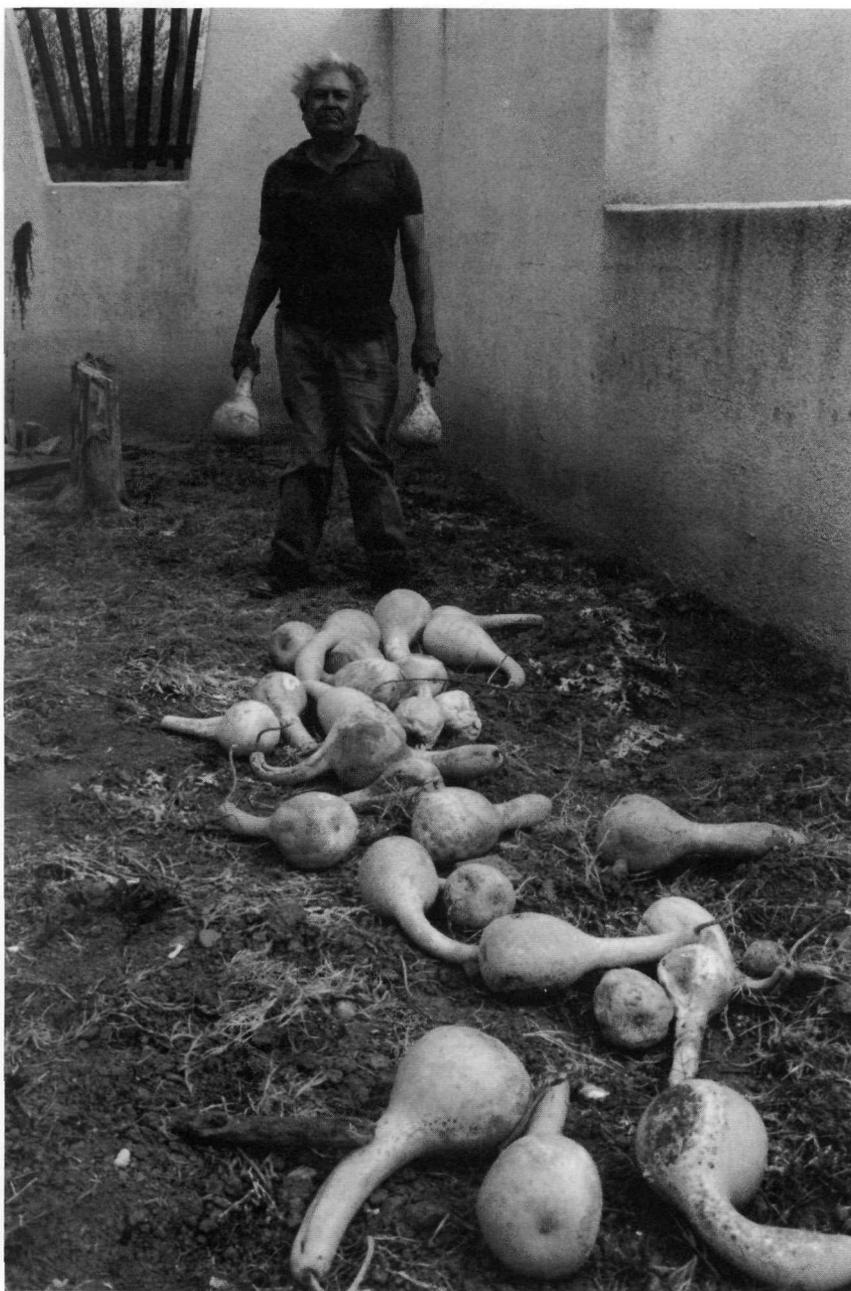
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Facing up to colonialism and its consequences

by Steven Charleston



SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, I was invited by Michael Peers, Primate of Canada, to participate in a dialogue between the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada and representatives from the Anglican Council of Indigenous People, the representative body of indigenous members of the church. The subject of this conversation was the impact of recent court decisions brought by the victims of both physical and sexual abuse in church-operated boarding schools. These judgments, which held the church liable for the abuse, raised the real possibility of financial disaster for several Anglican dioceses and, perhaps, for the church as a whole. The stakes were high and both the bishops and the indigenous people felt the tension. While the church had accepted responsibility and offered a public apology to the indigenous community, and while the First Nations members of the church had expressed their hope for a spiritual renewal in the aftermath of the tragedy, it was clear that true reconciliation would be a long and intricate process. In the end, however, the outcome of this particular meeting was enormously positive. Both “sides” in the exchange exhibited a genuine Christian desire for understanding and healing. They committed themselves to continue the process in partnership, whatever the financial future might hold. They reaffirmed that the gospel mission of the church would go on, in fact must go on, if the sad legacy of their shared past was to be redeemed.

I left the gathering with great respect for the church in Canada, for its indigenous leaders and its bishops. But most of all, I left with a fervent prayer that the church in this hemisphere would finally take its own colonial history seriously.

What does the Canadian experience teach us?

First, it graphically demonstrates that colonialism is not an historic artifact. The past is not gone and forgotten, even though some of us may pretend otherwise. Colonialism is historically radioactive. It has a long half-life that continues to poison the relationship between human beings even generations after the fact. The colonization of the Americas by European imperialism, aided and abetted by the Christian church, continues to haunt this hemisphere. Indigenous people, who are the survivors of one of the most systematic

efforts at “ethnic cleansing” in the history of the world, remain in the shadow of what I believe must be named the American Apartheid.

In North America, this apartheid accounts for what happened, what is still happening, in Canada. It explains why indigenous communities in the U.S. continue fighting in the courts to protect themselves, to protect their treaty rights, to protect the remnants of their ancient homeland. The struggles of the Gwich’in people, for example, who are faithful members of the Episcopal Church, illustrate this point. If there had been no legacy of colonial racism in Alaska, if Gwich’in culture had been respected from the outset as integral to the social and economic future of all the people in Alaska, and if the indigenous vision of the Earth as a sacred creation of God had been honored by the Christians who colonized Alaska, then the legal battles over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would never have occurred. The fact that indigenous people in both Canada and the U.S. go to court year after year is testimony to the legacy of the American Apartheid. It is evidence of the toxic effects of colonialism, racism and the inability of any society to honestly confront its own past.

South of the Rio Grande, in nations throughout Central and South America, what I describe as apartheid against indigenous people is far more obvious and deadly. In Guatemala alone, thousands of indigenous people have been killed in massacres conducted by state-supported terrorists. In the Chiapas region of Mexico, indigenous communities remain under the armed occupation of the Mexican military, existing in a constant state of siege. In both cases, the “crimes” of the indigenous people were to name the American Apartheid for what it is, to expose the truth that colonialism and racism in the Americas is ongoing and virulent, and to demand their basic rights as human beings.

Poverty, illiteracy, disease, hunger, oppression: The truth is just beyond the border. And yet, the life and death struggles of the indigenous people of the Southern Hemisphere remain invisible to the majority of North American Christians. Only as if in a mirage do we catch a glimpse of the suffering which occurs daily in what we, with such casual arrogance, have defined as “our own backyard.” If the North American media pays scant attention to Central and South America, it pays almost none at all to the original inhabitants of these nations. At best they are only colorful “extras” for nature specials on the rain forests or the condor, not real people with a legitimate civilization still in peril to colonial greed. North America’s media does not register them on the radar screen of global concerns. For all practical purposes, for all political purposes, they simply do not exist.

This leads to the second lesson the church must take to heart: Our blindness to the American Apartheid has consequences. In Canada, those consequences may be measured in both the human terms of broken relationships and in the

TRYING TO LIVE UP TO OUR NAME

More often than I care to say, I have wished *The Witness* had a different name. Usually for no better reason than to spare me the momentary discomfort of having people who have never heard of us think that we are affiliated with a well-known conservative religious denomination (with “Witnesses” figuring prominently in its name) whose theological perspective I find highly suspect. At such moments I wish for a name either less or more obscure — *Progressive Anglican*, say, or *2tru* (you decide which might be which).

But I am glad to share in our vocation of bearing witness to the world-as-it-is, whether plagued by evil and suffering or blessed by compassion and beauty. Enlarging perspectives is a crucial precondition for the deepening of spiritual and political understanding. And such deepening, in turn, is a critical precondition for thoughtful and faithful decisions about how to choose on behalf of life.

In this regard, we here at *The Witness* are especially grateful for the enlarging of perspective working on this issue on native peoples in the Americas has given us. Guided in our choice of stories by Steven Charleston and Owanah Anderson, both of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, we’ve truly benefited from getting a native perspective on the powers and principalities at work in our own hemisphere — and in our own country and church. Less happily, but equally beneficially, we have found ourselves bumping with alarming frequency into our staff’s mostly unexamined Western mindset (which included the embarrassing assumption that the people we’d want to interview would surely speak English, or that our “straight-forward” questions must not have been understood if the answers we got didn’t seem straightforward to us) — and the obvious limits this imposes on our work.

So, as we begin our 84th year of publication, we’ve decided to make some changes. One small, simple way to deepen our solidarity with the peoples whose lives form the content of this issue is to begin making room in our budget for offering as many articles as possible from this and future issues in Spanish, the language of so many of this hemisphere’s indigenous citizens. We’ve also decided to begin giving the people we interview (as, in this issue, Felipe and Elena Ixcot) the chance to say everything they’d like in answer to a question, even when space doesn’t allow in the magazine. We’ll use our website (www.thewitness.org) to make these downloadable articles available worldwide, and we’ll provide hard copies for duplication wherever electronic link-ups are lacking.

We’re also committing ourselves to working hard to rapidly expand our website’s “A Global Witness” section to provide a place where testimony of things seen and unseen can be offered from a wider array of witnesses than we’ve been able to provide space for until now.

I may not always like our name, I admit, but we here at *The Witness* are committed to living up to it. We appreciate your support as we attempt to do so.

— Julie A. Wortman, editor and publisher

monetary terms of a church in bankruptcy. In Alaska they may be measured by the loss of a natural beauty, the Arctic tundra, that can never be restored. In the South, they can be measured by tombstones.

When I describe our colonial history as radioactive, I mean to imply that it is lethal. It infects us. It permeates both ends of this hemisphere. It creates a pathology, which we pass from one generation to the next. A key aspect of this pathology is the inherent inability of the descendants of European colonizers to “see” those they have colonized. In the North, indigenous communities are still categorized in the most blatant stereotypes. They are dismissed as the historical leftovers of the Wild West myth created by colonialism as a macho justification for slaughter, brought into contemporary ridicule as the “casino Indians” who don’t deserve the money they make for playing the game taught to them by European greed, or trivialized as the shaman gurus for white suburban fantasies of spirituality. In the South, indigenous people are only a backdrop to the “real” stories, which concern North America: the war on drugs, NAFTA, the flight of economic refugees crossing our borders.

In the end, the vast majority of Christians

living in the privileged centers of power in this hemisphere have virtually no idea of the suffering of their faceless neighbors living under the American Apartheid. They are not conscious that their self-imposed glaucoma perpetuates the colonial tragedy of the past. Therefore, they are usually shocked when they discover the implications of this kind of racism. Whether the consequences come to them in financial, ecological or moral disasters, the blind managers of the American Apartheid are caught off guard by the sudden realization that the illness they have carried in the genetic structure of their own history has suddenly activated. The cycles of pain begin again. The pattern of struggle, oppression and denial runs its course through the courts or in the hidden places of the Americas where indigenous people pay with their freedom, their hopes or their lives because European Americans fear the truth. And eventually, when the stark light of that truth fades under the long shadows of America’s guilt, the eyes of the privileged public turn away, the indigenous people slowly dissolve before them, and the silence of shame descends to smother the cries of justice.

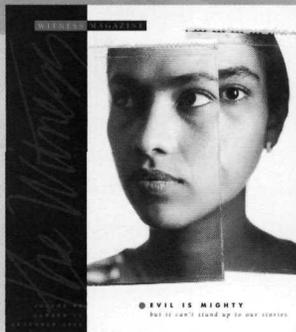
In this issue of *The Witness*, we are confronted with two lessons: colonialism and

consequences. Through the stories of indigenous people of the Americas, *The Witness* seeks to remind us that the truth of our own colonial past is all around us if only we have eyes to see. You can catch a glimpse of it in the struggles of the Canadian church to redress the abuses of the boarding schools. You can observe it as the subtext of the fight of indigenous Christians to preserve the Arctic National Wildlife refuge. You can be startled to see it so clearly in the faces of the people of Chiapas or Guatemala. With these many images of truth, *The Witness* calls all of us to open our eyes, recognize the cost of our complicity in not being able to “see” one another, and then to respond by breaking the cycles of pain which fuel the American Apartheid. Ultimately, this issue offers the church a chance to learn a third lesson, one that is filled with the hope of faith and with the power of liberation.

When I flew home from Canada after the historic encounter between the survivors of colonialism and the inheritors of its moral burden, I returned with a stronger sense of hope than I had ever known before. I had seen with my own eyes that men and women of faith can face their past, confront its consequences and still work together toward a future of justice and reconciliation. I knew that if this were true, then the days of the American Apartheid were numbered. I knew that none of us are condemned to be the repetitive victims of the blind cycles of racist colonialism. We can, and I believe we will, break free of the shame and fear. We will finally bring justice to the indigenous people of the Americas. The lesson learned last is often the most important. We have much to do. It will be a difficult job. In the South, it will be a dangerous job. But it is a task we have put off far too long. The gospels tell us that Jesus Christ came to heal the blind and to set the captives free. Between the descendants of the conquerors and the survivors of the Western Hemisphere, we cannot do one without the other. Now is the time to do both. ●

Steven Charleston, of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, is president and dean of Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., and the former Bishop of Alaska.

‘All that we are, all that we have, comes from God and will one day return to God.’



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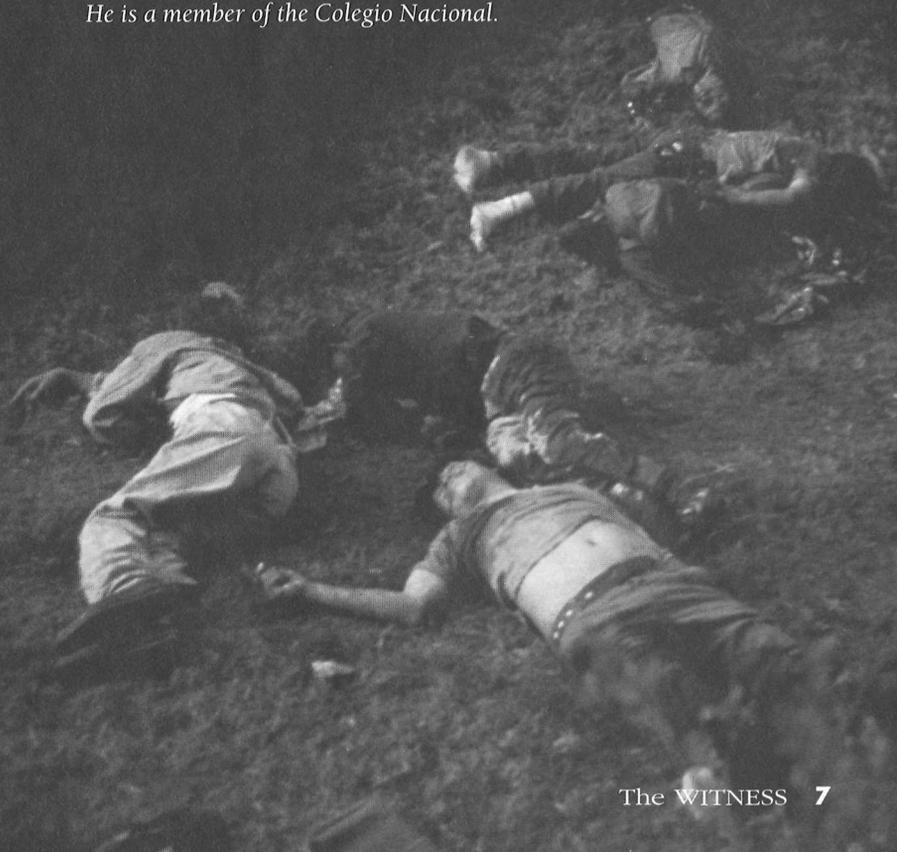
by José Emilio Pacheco

In 1982, at the beginning
of everything we now see unfolding in Chiapas,
Algeria and Rwanda,
the wealth of Forbes' 400
amounted to only \$92 billion.
By 1996 they had amassed \$477 billion.
Another year of globalization increased their fortunes.
In 1998 the richest people in the world
taken together possess \$624 billion.
If someone mentions to them
the village of Acteal in Chenalhó, Chiapas,
45 defenseless dead, finished off
with machetes and expanding hollowpoint bullets
the gentlemen of Forbes would say:
"We are fed up with catastrophic news.
Enough talk about victims.
There is no point in mentioning disasters.
We detest the complaints and lamentations.
We don't want to hear about the 7,000 displaced
(Indians)
in Poloh and in X'oyer
who protect themselves against the murderous groups."
Acteal is nothing
compared with what may come
if immediate action is not taken.
One need only read Andre Gluckman
("The Third Death of God"
in last Wednesday's Spanish daily "El Pais")
about what happened in Bainen,
eight kilometers from Algiers,
on Christmas eve,
two days after the Chiapas massacre:
Hava, 3 years old,
Yahia, 8
and Selma, 11,
were disemboweled.
Their murderers hung their entrails
like garlands on the tree branches.
On top of the decapitated body of their father,
a doll's head.
The mother, the grandmother, the aunt, the uncles ...
the whole family was cut to pieces.
And a nine year old boy
nailed by the arms, crucified.

There are no words, says Gluckman — and it makes one
shudder
to think again of Acteal —
for such indescribable cruelty,
to speak the unspeakable,
to narrate the unimaginable.
If one were to talk about these things, for instance,
with Phil Knight (number 17 in Forbes' list),
owner of Nike and Air Jordan,
companies that enslave little girls in Asian sweat shops,
he will say: "This isn't an issue that should
even be on the political agenda today."
How far?
How long?

— January 11, 1998 (translation by Monique J. Lemaitre and
Duane Ediger), 1998 Rights Reserved, Comunicacion e
Informacion S.A.de C.V.

*José Emilio Pacheco is one of Mexico's prominent poets.
He has also written novels, essays and short stories.
He is a member of the Colegio Nacional.*



'WE STRUGGLE BECAUSE THE

An interview with Felipe and Elena Ixcot

by Joyce Penfield

Joyce Penfield: Why did you leave Guatemala?

Felipe Ixcot: It is 18 years since we had to leave Guatemala. When I was 18 years old, I became involved in the church because my father was a catechist. I finished a course as Social Promoter in the Diocese of Quetzaltenango along with 35 other Mayan youth of different languages. It was there that I gained my social conscience as a community organizer with only one intention: to get rid of this misery in which we live. Elena and I got married in 1969 and we organized a youth group in the community and a literacy campaign. When the repression arrived in the 1980s, all of our work was destroyed by the army and death squads who killed or kidnapped various of our co-workers and friends. Then they came after us. For three months I was an internal refugee in Guatemala. Elena during this time received death threats and therefore we had to flee the country with family. We entered Mexico near Tapachula in Chiapas and there our daughter, Maya Ixchel, was born. (Ixchel means "moon" in Mayan. According to our legend the moon taught Mayan women how to weave.) In Mexico, immigration officials were always in the coffee plantations looking for the undocumented so we could never live in peace. Fortunately, we were able to get assistance from Catholic and Presbyterian Mexican friends who helped us go to Mexico City. Eventually we fled to a Presbyterian church in Tucson and then we were taken to a reservation near Phoenix, where Pima and Papago native peoples lived. Later Sister Darlene Nigorski came and told us about a church that could give us sanctuary and security. That is how we entered sanctuary

with the Benedictine Brothers in Weston Priory, Vermont.

J.P.: Have you been back to Guatemala since then?

F.I.: Yes. We have visited three times since we got our permanent residency in the U.S. in January 1999. What we found was a disaster, because the people are still traumatized by the war. In order for healing to occur, we need to know who massacred our people. But impunity still exists in Guatemala. The people have no confidence in the authorities. Thus there has been no healing. As for security, kidnappings continue, death threats of human rights leaders continue. The Mayan people in the villages have been forgotten. There is no help for their communities: no schools, no roads, no drinkable water, no health clinics.

The Peace Accords have not worked for anyone. Many say that they exist only to silence the armed struggle and not to deal with the roots of the problems. The people continue to be hungry. More than 50 percent have no work. And 75 percent of the land is still in the hands of 3 percent of land owners. The devaluation of the dollar has also had a big effect. In my town of 14,000 people, more than 6,000 young people have left to work in the U.S. because after finishing their studies there is no work. And there is no land, either, to continue working.

J.P.: What changes did you find in Guatemala when you visited there in 1999?

F.I.: When we arrived at the airport in Quetzaltenango, we saw lots of air pollution. This is new for me. On the edge of the



Felipe Ixcot, a founder of the International Mayan League, escaped the death squads of Guatemala with his wife, Elena, and their children in 1982. They have been living in sanctuary with the Benedictine Brothers of Weston Priory in Vermont since 1984. They have dedicated their lives to promoting the rights and culture of the Mayan people, both in Guatemala and in the U.S.

LAND IS OUR MOTHER'



© Joyce Penfield

city, there was so much garbage right near houses. This didn't exist before. And plastic products have been introduced. International corporations have lured the people to use plastic. When our mothers went to the market, they would take their baskets and plates. If they bought salt, it was wrapped in the leaf of a plant. And later it was washed and used for tamales. The leaves were fed to the horses. Nothing contaminated the earth.

Another thing: thread, which is so important to the Mayan woman because weaving is part of her life and her dreams. Cotton is totally Mayan. Thousands of years ago our ancestors painted thread with different colors for weaving. But now, there is a German company in Quetzaltenango that sells acrylic thread cheaply. International corporations have attacked our culture.

J.P.: I remember some years ago you helped form the International Mayan League. What is its purpose?

F.I.: The International Mayan League (LMI) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that was born in Costa Rica. Its function is to further scientific, philosophical and artistic knowledge of all Mayans in Guatemala and also unite Mayans who live outside of Guatemala so that they can know their roots. Another goal is to help the international community become familiar with the political situation the Mayans in Guatemala suffer and to leave a special place for women. LMI also disseminates information about human rights violations. The organization has a political-cultural identity. We don't only speak about the richness of Mayan culture but also its suffering — the racism, oppression, persecution and death to which the Mayan people of Guatemala have been submitted for 500 long years and, in particular, the last 36 years of war.

We have begun to organize our Mayan people in Guatemala to learn about the roots of their existence. What did the Mayans do to develop their civilization before Christopher Columbus arrived? LMI is a great political and peaceful tool for bringing change to

Guatemala. We must begin with our roots. Also we have organized a Mayan Congress here in the U.S. in nine states in which we have training. We want the Mayans living in the U.S. to also know their true history.

J.P.: Why is identity so important for Mayans?

F.I.: When the people finally know this, they are going to open their eyes and understand why they are suffering now. They are going to realize who are the legitimate owners of the land. Why are the grandchildren of Mayan doctors now dying of what only costs five cents to cure? And why do we who lived here before Europeans arrived on this continent now live under such oppression? It is important that the Mayan people know who their ancestors were and what they achieved in science.

According to history, Mayans developed their civilization with three crops: corn, beans and pumpkins. Mayan legend has it that our creator made us out of corn: love of the sky and love of the land. So if we are corn, we are part of nature. That's why Mayan people are so zealous about caring for nature. If we attack plants, we are attacking ourselves because we are part of nature and we are corn. That is our past. It's not what the anthropologists write in books. They say that we were ignorant and that the Europeans brought us civilization. What is "civilization"? Is it the theft of land? Is it the raping of women? Is it the massacre of people? That is what Europe brought.

And as for the land: We don't struggle so hard for land for economic reasons. We struggle because the land is our mother. That is why we struggle over it. It's because we have this relation with the earth. Many human rights organizations in Guatemala do not understand this. They don't pay attention to the roots of the problems nor educate the people in the villages directly about the value of their Mayan culture — a civilization in existence for 10,000 years. Christianity scarcely has been in existence 2,000 years!

J.P.: What are the major issues that confront the Mayan woman today?

Elena Ixcot: Endless problems. A major problem that Mayan women confront today is discrimination because they have never been given an important role to play in political and religious areas. The other problem is that the original woman of this continent has no access to political participation. She is illiterate. And because of the war in Guatemala, she confronts more serious aspects of life. She is left widowed and has to work for the survival of herself and her children all alone. She has never had an opportunity to participate in the political and social aspects of the society. But now there is more active participation as Mayan women have begun to struggle for their rights. They demand from their government: Why kidnappings? Why disappearances of their loved ones? Why forced recruitment that takes away their sons? Mayan women continue to struggle for survival but also to claim their rights.

J.P.: I know both of you have worked in the church a great deal. What are your thoughts about the relationship between the church and the Mayan religion?

F.I.: The church still continues categorizing, but Mayan religion can't be called a religion. It is more a "cosmovision." Its form of understanding life and the existence of God is very special. We Mayans believe more in that which gives us life, that which exists. For example, the rain exists. The sun exists. And when we have a Mayan ceremony, it isn't purely spiritual. It is also educational because reverence is given to the earth and it is explained to the people why reverence is given. Neither is Mayan religion polytheistic because we believe in respecting these elements which are part of our existence. We don't say that they are God, but we honor and respect them. One way to complete the encounter of the two cultures would be for the church to assume its responsibility in finding a road of unity and stop calling Mayans pagans.

We know many things that are found in the Bible that the church doesn't realize. For example, Jesus used many plants to explain the reign of God, mustard seeds and fig trees, because these are part of nature and part of

human beings. Then there is the Holy Spirit who comes in the form of fire. Fire in Mayan culture is the center of life. There is a huge contrast between the Mayan and Christian cosmovision. For example, when the Christians came and told our ancestors they were going to eternal fire if they didn't respect God, our ancestors said: But fire is our friend! How were the Europeans interpreting the existence of fire compared to the Mayans? The church doesn't even make a space to study: What is Mayan culture? It only criticizes it. The encounter of the two cultures — Mayan religion and Christianity — has never been achieved or completed.

E.I.: Our hope and our vision is that we can share more about the Mayan cosmovision with the church because we are from this continent and they brought a religion that was born outside of this continent. But so far, with so many people on this continent in North and South America, we have never heard of anything joined with the church. It hasn't happened.

J.P.: What do we non-Mayans need to understand better?

F.I.: To understand that from a Mayan point of view all of humanity is part of this way of life, and protection of all our environment. In the Mayan cosmovision, everyone is brother of the world and shares in the protection of the environment. Another thing is that Mayan culture is the spinal column that sustains Guatemala. And we ask our North American friends to write your government and ask them to place conditions on aid for the government of Guatemala until the Peace Accords are completed.

E.I.: What we require now is mutual respect. That is what brings unity to humanity. Justice, peace, and freedom can be attained by everyone uniting in mutual respect. ●

Joyce Penfield attends the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. She was active in the Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s and has led several North American peace delegations to Guatemala. A longer version of this interview is available at <www.thewitness.org>.

INVISIBLE PEOPLE

With whom do Anglicans stand?

THE MODERN ERA OF MISSIONS, which gave birth to our communion, began with the first outreach to indigenous people in North America. Since then, the mission to the indigenous nations throughout the world has been a key component in the establishment of many dioceses and provinces. The invisibility of indigenous people and their concerns at the Lambeth Conference [of 1998] is stunning in light of the long history of the church's mission to them. In light of the present-day situation of indigenous people, this invisibility is more than stunning, it is frightening. Often found living within the borders of the "first world" countries of the North, they experience poverty and hunger at a level that parallels conditions in the two-thirds world. Though they retain their tribal identity and relationship to the land, indigenous people are also frequently found living in urban environments. Statements regarding the wealth of the "first world" ignore the poverty of the many. Strategies for mission in urban environments do not consider their presence. In the battle between North and South, indigenous peoples rarely rate an afterthought.

Indigenous people in the world today

Today, indigenous peoples, The People of the Land, stand, both spiritually and physically, in the way of a spirituality of greed in a global culture of consumption. Spiritually, their family- and clan-based traditionalism is in the first line against scientific materialism. Physically, they inhabit the dangerous border between a greedy world and the resources necessary for over-consumption.

Only rarely do nations bother to go through the charade of debt to steal from the indigenous people. They say, "It is our land. They are our resources (cf. Rev 18)." Those who get in the way are in extreme cases simply murdered in overt genocide. Many more are destroyed, with only slightly less speed, in the aftermath of cultural and spiritual destruction — displacement and theft, disease and hunger, suicide and despair.

Although all people feel the "fragmentation" of modern life, indigenous peoples do not see it as a problem of "pluralism and diversity." It is the larger dominant culture's unforgiving call to "fit in" to the larger scheme of things. The eagerness of many to appropriate native symbols does not hide the basic modern hostility toward indigenous peoples. Deeply held prejudice is often betrayed in seemingly innocent contexts. For example, two preliminary section reports here at Lambeth have said that the fragmentation of

modern life leads to a "New Tribalism." To indigenous people, "Tribalism" is the opposite — a clan-based communal identity is associated with survival, hospitality, and solidarity with all of creation and her creator.

The mechanisms and institutions that are developed to cope with the fragmentation of modern life are often destructive for indigenous peoples. For example, many types of counseling are based on an understanding of "self" that is derived from the present cultural reality of mass consumer-oriented culture. When applied to indigenous people, these therapies are more than ineffective — they can only increase a sense of fragmentation and alienation.

Where do we go?

One-fourth of the world's remaining usable land is now in the hands of indigenous people. It will, no doubt, be the "battlefield" of many conflicts among the nations in the years to come. What is the hope of indigenous peoples in this precarious situation? Witnessing how easy it has been "not to notice" the tribal nations in this conference one is tempted to fear. If neither side of the geo-political and cultural conflicts that dominated our attention here at Lambeth could "see" indigenous people, will they be seen in the battles for land, air, and water that will surely be a feature of much of the next century? Yet, despite all of what could be said in the negative, today indigenous peoples throughout the world are in a Spirit-led cultural renaissance. Many are accepting the new life of the Gospel with great momentum. Where this has happened, it has only strengthened the Spirit-based traditionalism of their societies. Certainly, it has also intensified the struggle they have with a globe-eating culture of consumption.

The songs and prayers are getting stronger, the voice of Jesus is clear, and the power that sustains life never more evident. The question for this conference is not, "Will indigenous peoples stand?" After over 500 years of deadly hostility aimed toward them, they still do — with pride and strength. Similarly, the question is not, "Does Jesus stand with them?" The question for this conference is whether the Anglican Communion stands with the indigenous peoples. ●

— from "A Statement to Lambeth from the Anglican Indigenous Peoples Network," by Mark MacDonald. MacDonald is the Episcopal Bishop of Alaska and a member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company's board of directors (publisher of *The Witness*).

THE GWICH'IN

'The most Anglican group of people in the world'

by Murray Carpenter

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Ken Whitten

The 130,000 caribou of the Porcupine herd migrate hundreds of miles to the ANWR coastal plain annually to give birth to their young. The Gwich'in, 7,000 people living in 15 villages along interior Alaska and Canada, have always been dependent on the Porcupine herd.

AND ANWR

fight for the right to protect a way of life.

THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (ANWR) means different things to different people. Environmentalists see the 19-million-acre tract in extreme northeastern Alaska as a last remnant of wilderness, home to wolves, wolverines, polar bears and snowy owls. Oil developers see it as the last best hope for a large oil field in the U.S. And the Gwich'in people see the area as a critical birthing area for caribou — and for a way of life.

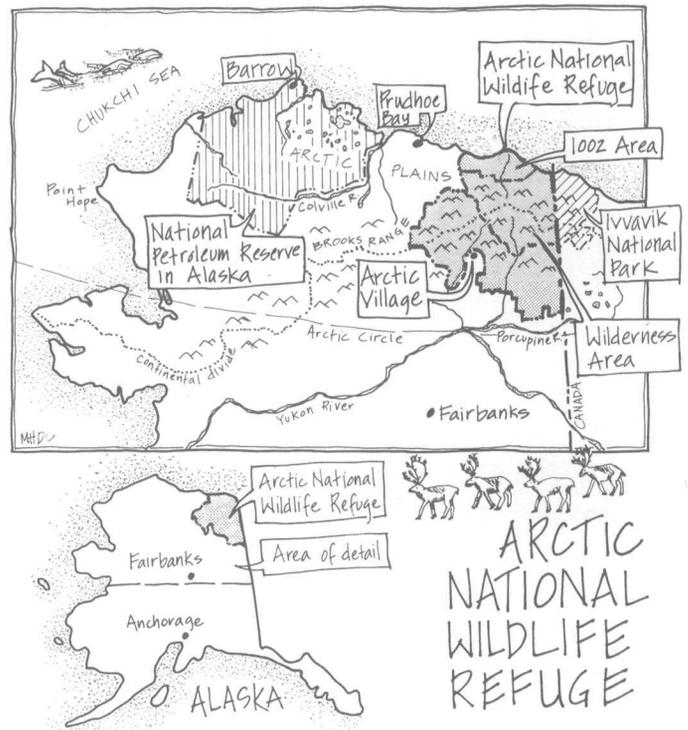
The 130,000 caribou of the Porcupine herd migrate hundreds of miles to the ANWR coastal plain annually to give birth to their young. The Gwich'in, 7,000 people living in 15 villages along interior Alaska and Canada, have always been dependent on the Porcupine herd (named after the Porcupine River). Caribou are not just another animal to the Gwich'in, they are part of them.

Caribou, culture and 'spiritual solidarity'

"We've always lived like this," says Faith Gemmill, who is from the Gwich'in settlement of Arctic Village, located just south of the refuge, and along the caribou migration route. "We even have a creation story that we came from the caribou." According to Gemmill, the Gwich'in and the animals struck a deal. "The Gwich'in would retain a piece of the caribou heart, and the caribou would retain a piece of the Gwich'in heart," said Gemmill. "So whatever happens to the caribou happens to us, and whatever happens to us, happens to them."

The Gwich'in, and a number of environmentalists, are concerned that oil development along the coast would devastate the Porcupine herd and the Gwich'in way of life. "We're dependent on caribou," said Gemmill. "If [drilling] were allowed, slowly we would lose aspects of our culture. We just want to pass along what we have to our future generations. I want to pass it on to my daughter, and she's only two now."

Caribou comprises as much as 80 percent of the Gwich'in diet, Gemmill says. The hides are used for clothing, the bones for tools. Caribou have inspired traditional songs and dances. In sum, Gemmill said, "It's everything. Spiritually, culturally and socially, too. Like when we're out on the mountain hunting; it's very important for us to have that time up there with the caribou." During the hunt, young boys are taught the role of being the provider, hunting, and giving



thanks. Young women are taught to prepare the meat, and other traditional roles. "We live in modern communities, we have TVs, we have telephones," says Gemmill, "but we need that time of year with the caribou."

Sarah James, a Neetsaii ("from the south side of the Brooks Range") Gwich'in from Arctic Village, agrees about the importance of the hunt in teaching the youth "survival, patience, sharing." The hunt also provides specific sustenance to the Gwich'in. "We need fresh meat for our bodies, we survive year to year by hunting or fishing. If that's missing from our bodies, we feel different," said James. "Going out [hunting] like that, that's the way I grew up."

A surprising fact to many outsiders is that most Gwich'in are Episcopalian. "We're Episcopalians in Alaska, for about 100 years," Gemmill



©Nick Comyles/IMPACT VISUALS

Gwich'in Randell Tetlachi in his family cabin.

says. “My great-grandfather was one of the first Episcopal ministers; he helped translate the Bible to our language. We say the Lord’s Prayer in our language, sing traditional hymns in our language.” Gemmill sees no real distinction between traditional Gwich’in spirituality and Christianity. “It’s the same,” she says. “We have our traditional songs, our traditional dances.”

Mark MacDonald, Episcopal Bishop of Alaska, agrees, “Gwich’in Christianity has become a way to affirm and embrace the old ways and the new ways, without losing cultural cohesiveness and solidarity. The Gwich’in are brilliant theologians. Gwich’in traditional culture is much closer to Christianity and Jesus than the dominating culture — Christian or not.”

MacDonald adds, “The church has found ANWR a compelling issue since General Convention in 1991. This is because it involves both an environmental concern, in the protection of ANWR, and a human rights concern, in the protection of the Gwich’in way of life. The Gwich’in people, arguably the most Anglican group of people in the world, are directly dependent upon the Porcupine Caribou herd for survival. A threat to the herd is a threat to Gwich’in cultural and

physical survival.”

The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church last spring renewed its support for permanent protection of ANWR in a resolution “in spiritual solidarity with the Gwich’in people.”

‘Among the most pristine ecosystems on earth’

The untrammled land that is now part of the refuge has nurtured the Gwich’in for centuries. “It’s an ecosystem that’s been intact, and a way of life that’s been intact for thousands of years,” says Gemmill. She adds that the region she hopes to protect is a finite strip of land. “It’s the last 5 percent of America’s arctic coast that’s not open to oil development. We’re not asking much. We should not be asked to sacrifice our culture, our way of life. It’s not fair or right.”

The entire refuge is over 19 million acres, the same size as Maine. It was dedicated by President Dwight David Eisenhower in 1960 at the behest of scientists and conservationists who felt it had some of the most extraordinary natural values in the arctic. The Brooks Range swings down close to the coast here, making the coastal plain much narrower than it is farther west near Prudhoe Bay, and com-

pressing a great many diverse habitats into a compact area within the refuge.

The great herds of migratory caribou have earned ANWR comparisons to Africa's wildlife-rich Serengeti Plain. In addition to the caribou, the refuge is home to wolves, musk oxen, wolverines, snowy owls and great flocks of snow geese. For a place so far north, the refuge features a great diversity of species: over 160 birds, 36 land mammals, nine marine mammals, and 36 fish. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the refuge, "The Arctic Refuge is among the most complete, pristine, and undisturbed ecosystems on earth."

At risk: the ANWR coast

Eight million acres of the refuge are protected as wilderness; it's the largest wilderness area in the refuge system. But only 30 of the 125 miles of coastline fall into the wilderness area. The coastal area is most critical for the caribou, polar bears and many other species. It's also the area oil developers hope to tap. In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act doubled the size of ANWR, set aside 8 million acres of the refuge as wilderness, and, controversially, designated 1.5 million acres on the coastal plain as an area to be studied for oil development. This so-called 1002 area, named for the section of ANILCA that created it, comprises the vast majority of the ANWR coast.

Adam Kolton of the Alaska Wilderness League says there have been constant efforts to open ANWR to oil development ever since the Trans-Alaskan pipeline started delivering oil from Prudhoe Bay in 1977. A federal study released in 1987 recommended full-scale oil development. But the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill scuttled the momentum. "Images of dead sea otters, killer whales and shorebirds on the TV every night," he says, "really changed all of that."

Other legislative efforts to open ANWR to drilling came after concerns about dependence on foreign oil flared in the wake of the Gulf War and then a few years later, when concerns about the national debt were high.

The Alaska Wilderness League is pushing efforts to protect the area as wilderness, a measure supported by over 200 members of the House and Senate, and a large segment of the public. In the final months of the Clinton administration, a number of ANWR advocates urged President Clinton to declare the area a National Monument.

"There's huge support from the American people for protecting this area," says Kolton.

In Alaska, the general sentiment is exactly the opposite. "It's become just about illegitimate [for Alaskan politicians] to oppose development in ANWR," says Bob Childers, an advisor to the Gwich'in Steering Committee. "Basically, oil taxes pay 80 percent of the budget." Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski has been the "most vociferous advocate" in Washington, D.C., repeatedly introducing legislation to open the refuge to drilling. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates 3.2 billion gallons of economically recoverable oil lie beneath ANWR, about the amount the U.S. burns in five months.

The recent momentum for drilling in the refuge has been partly prompted by high oil prices, but some believe the oil would provide

Indigenous peoples battling corporate culture

While the Gwich'in struggle with big oil in Alaska, other native peoples are having similar struggles with modern industrial society.

In northeast Colombia, the U'wa Indians have threatened to commit mass suicide by jumping off a cliff if Occidental Petroleum proceeds with plans to explore and develop oil deposits beneath their ancestral homeland. The U'wa claim Occidental's developments, supported by the Colombian government, are just the most recent in a constant erosion of their land rights over hundreds of years.

The U'wa conflict has at least three strong U.S. connections: Occidental Petroleum is based in California; the U.S. is the largest importer of Colombian oil; and the \$1.3 billion the U.S. is spending on "Plan Colombia" will strengthen the Colombian military which has worked on Occidental's behalf, brutally at times, to clear roads of protesters and otherwise smooth the way for oil exploration. The U'wa called on foreign governments to reject funding for Plan Colombia because the Colombian government "seeks through this plan to increase violations against the Colombian people and, in particular, against indigenous groups."

In Maine, the Penobscot Indian Nation is fighting the state over the authority to regulate wastewater discharged in the Penobscot River watershed (see *TW* 6/99). Because the Penobscots claim the state's largest river and its islands as their reservation, they argue that they should be allowed to regulate discharges to the river. The state opposes the Penobscot's position, and has been joined by over 30 municipalities and businesses, including pulp and paper mills, concerned that the Penobscots might set unreasonably high standards. The Penobscots argue that they've been living on and with the land and river since the Ice Age, and ought to have the authority to prevent further industrial pollution like the dioxin that has made Penobscot fish, once a dietary staple, unsafe to eat.

The flip side of native sovereignty and the environment is visible in Utah, where the Skull Valley Goshutes hope to site a high-level radioactive waste dump on their reservation. In this case, the tribal leadership and a majority of the tribal members want the dump as a means of "economic development," while Utah's governor, environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, and over 50 Indian tribes oppose it.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on environmental struggles of indigenous peoples, see the Indigenous Environmental Network website at
<<http://www.alphacdc.com/ien/>>.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT the Gwich'in, contact Faith Gemmill of the Gwich'in Steering Committee at
<gwichin2@alaska.net>.

log on to The Witness

Check out 'A Global Witness' :

Through this section of our website we are offering analysis and commentary from around the U.S. church and the global Anglican Communion. Our aim is to encourage a reclaiming of the Anglican vocation to doing "public theology" — and to expand awareness of the issues and struggles occupying the hearts and minds of Anglicans and other persons of faith worldwide.

Postings include: Irene Monroe's regular 'Queer take' column and commentaries from Peter Selby, Katie Sherrod and others.

little price relief. "We think the evidence is pretty overwhelming that drilling in the refuge would have absolutely no impact on energy prices," says Kolton. "It's really Economics 101: The price of oil is determined by global supply and demand. The simple fact is that, with less than 3 percent of the world's global reserves, we can't drill ourselves to economic independence. We need to decrease our dependence on oil rather than plundering the area."

At stake: a people's spiritual and cultural authority

The Gwich'in have opposed oil development on the refuge since a 1988 meeting, when Gwich'in elders — four from the U.S. and four from Canada, representing 15 villages from Mackenzie Peninsula to Arctic Village — said "no" with "one voice and no compromise."

"It was unanimous, we can't allow it," Gemmill says. "The elders told us to go out and educate the public. It wasn't the environmental community that asked us to take a stand, we did it on our own, with the elders. One of our main cultural values is respect for the land and the animals. One of our spiritual beliefs is that any birthplace, any spawning area, is sacred."

But environmental protection is just part of the equation. "For us it's a human rights issue, not just an environmental issue," Gemmill says. "Every human should have the right just to live." James agrees, "We have the right to say, 'No, we don't want oil development.' It's just human rights versus oil."

ANWR may seem remote, but choices being made by distant industrial economies are now affecting the Gwich'in, most notably in the case of global warming brought on by fossil fuel combustion. Gemmill says the Gwich'in see "many alarming changes" related to global warming, including plants growing differently and migration routes and times changing. Warming is a symptom of a bigger problem. "People are depleting the earth's resources too fast. The earth won't be able to sustain life," she said. Gemmill said many native people, not just the Gwich'in, are saying "Stop ... and give the earth time to heal."

MacDonald believes this is more than an isolated skirmish over preserving the environment or protecting human rights; there is a bigger issue at stake. "Many of the arguments that the church has found compelling in supporting the Gwich'in and other indigenous groups are based in similar views of the spiritual and cultural authority of a 'people' — a nation. These arguments are at the center of our basic moral and spiritual teaching," says MacDonald. "This is the first major skirmish in what may prove to be one of the decisive moral battles of this century. One-fourth of the world's usable land is in the hands of indigenous people. These 'Peoples of the Land' are on the front line of human survival. They are the thin line between the insatiable greed and total destruction of our moral, spiritual, and physical environments."

For now, the Gwich'in are continuing their efforts to get the word out about ANWR. "The elders directed us to go out into the world and tell people why we opposed oil development," James says of the grassroots campaign. "We don't have much money to work with; we've got multi-million-dollar corporations against us. But people do have power. And we've proven that. This is the right thing to do, and that's why."

Even as they struggle to protect ANWR, the Gwich'in work to preserve their traditional culture. James doesn't have any interest in seeing the Gwich'in way of life, now a mixture of cash and subsistence economies, subsumed by modern western culture. "I don't see much value in western culture, but I'm not opposed to higher learning," says James. And she notes that while many places have seen a lot of environmental damage from modern industrial society, ANWR is an ecosystem that still functions well.

"I don't see many places where the natural ecosystems still work," says James. "We're talking about caribou that are still wild and healthy. It's a small place they've gone for thousands of years, it's a safe place for them. It's a special place, a healthy place tucked away in that corner of the world, and it needs to be protected." ●

Murray Carpenter is a freelance writer based in Belfast, Me.

LAWSUITS AND...

Lawsuits may leave Canadian Anglicans with only 'a book, a bottle of wine and some bread'

by Marianne Arbogast

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THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA is facing what may be its most difficult time “in living memory,” Anglican Primate Michael Peers said in a September sermon at St. James Cathedral in Toronto. Memory, in fact, is at the heart of the church’s current struggles. In living memory of thousands of indigenous Canadians now embroiled in lawsuits against the government and mainstream churches of Canada, native children were taken from their families to be schooled in European culture, religion and lifestyle. Some 130 Indian residential schools were administered by the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist (now United) churches to carry out the government policy of assimilation of native peoples. The Anglican Church ran 26 residential schools between 1820 and 1969. In addition to the incalculable loss of family and community, language and values, large numbers of children were subjected to physical and sexual abuse. The schools’ legacy includes broken families, alcoholism and suicide.

Three hundred fifty-nine lawsuits, involving 1,600 survivors of this abuse, are now facing the national Anglican Church or its dioceses. The Canadian government is named in more than 1,500 lawsuits involving 7,000 survivors. In many cases, claimants brought lawsuits against the government, which then brought third-party claims against the churches.

According to a Residential Schools website set up by the Anglican

Church, the total assets of the General Synod (the church’s national body) amount to less than \$10 million. The damages claimed in the lawsuits naming the General Synod exceed \$2 billion, and legal costs continue to escalate. The church may be facing bankruptcy. Although church leaders have assured dioceses that their contributions are not disappearing down legal sinkholes, the drain on the church’s assets has already impacted its ministries. In August 2000 eight national church staff positions were cut, and grants to assisted dioceses in the north of Canada (one-third of the church’s budget) were reduced by 5 percent. The national church’s newspaper, *The Anglican Journal*, suffered a significant cutback, and a national resource center supporting parish ministries was closed.

“There have been shortfalls in donations from dioceses for other reasons,” said Jim Boyles, the church’s general secretary. “In normal times we might well have been able to handle that through normal budgetary processes. But since we are using our reserves for legal expenses, interest income has fallen, and there is uncertainty because of the continuing drain from the church’s assets.”

In October, the synod of the Diocese of Cariboo in British Columbia — financially depleted by legal fees stemming from lawsuits filed after the conviction, for sexual abuse, of a former dormitory supervisor at St. George’s School in Lytton, B.C. — voted to authorize its bishop, James Cruickshank, and its executive council to formally wind up the affairs of the diocese in the next 12 months. Only one of 15 cases involving the diocese has been decided. Now under appeal, it is also the only case of all those involving the Anglican Church to have proceeded to judgment.

The Diocese of Cariboo — comprised of 17 small parishes that have struggled to become self-supporting and have gradually increased their self-reliance — is engaged in a dispute with the government over ownership of parish buildings, with the government claiming they are diocesan assets, and the diocese asserting that it holds them in trust for the parishes. Delegates to the Cariboo synod laughed when the diocesan chancellor reported that federal lawyers had asked for a list of “jewels and paintings” owned by the churches, many of which are small and poorly equipped. Echoing the national church’s stated priority of “healing and reconciliation,” Cruickshank urged his diocese to focus on indigenous ministry.

"We need more healing circles and we need to participate in the healing gatherings. And we must always ask what are the needs of the survivors of abuse at St. George's, and we must ask them how we can best respond. We must also ask what role this diocese can play in confronting the racist backlash which we know is present."

The church is facing "pruning," Cruickshank said, which will enable it to "grow back more compassionately than we ever could have imagined possible, because we will know what it's like to be powerless."

While affirming the church's willingness to accept moral and financial responsibility, Anglican leaders have called on the government to find an alternative to the expensive, drawn-out, adversarial court process.

"We'd like to see a comprehensive plan to resolve these claims in the most humane and expeditious way possible," Boyles said. "Our church supports the concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution and has been working with the government on 12 pilot projects, but it is very, very slow. We believe the government needs to look at alternative ways of handling claims. The church and federal government must find a way through these cases so they're not fighting each other, but rather focusing on the victims of abuse in the schools."

Boyles says such a process should be based on principles outlined in a report by the Law Commission of Canada, which include "compensation, apology, memorialization, and commitment to ensure such abuse doesn't happen in the future."

In his September sermon at St. James, Peers acknowledged that he does not know if the national church will survive in its present form. "I do not know if those dioceses that are in financial difficulty will survive either," he said. "I do not know if church buildings in those dioceses will have to be sold. ... But there are things I do know. I know that the way of the cross is the way to life. I know that it makes possible — in fact, even inevitable — the setting free of the kingdom of God."

As Bishop Duncan Wallace, quoted in *The Anglican Journal*, put it, "All we need is a book, a bottle of wine and some bread and we're in business." ●

... THE LOSS



An interview with Donna Bomberry

by Marianne Arbogast

[Ed. note: Donna Bomberry is Indigenous Ministries Coordinator for the Anglican Church of Canada.]

Marianne Arbogast: Why is the issue of residential schools so significant for native people in Canada today?

Donna Bomberry: It's very complex and steeped in the history of our relationships in Canada. The Anglican Church, with the other church denominations who administered the residential schools for the government, operated residential schools until 1969. So it's still a live experience for my generation, the next generation older than myself and our children and grandchildren coming after us.

There are many issues that native people have with that experience, but the major focus here in Canada is the litigation that has come about because of physical and sexual abuse that happened to former students. But there are other issues that come out of it as people recall their experience. It is often termed cultural genocide, where people lose their language and identity as part of a people and within a family and a community. And other losses have been identified. Being raised in an institution, you don't learn relationship skills, parenting and how to be family. So the legacy affects three to four generations who are living today.

M.A.: What kind of outcome do you think indigenous Canadians are hoping for from the lawsuits?

D.B.: I guess they're seeking redress. But they haven't seen or heard anything. Our Council [the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples] has noted the actions of some lawyers in

Canada who were seeking First Nations people to sign up to litigation. People didn't know what they were signing up for. They heard promises of dollars or whatever promises the lawyers were making, and people would sign on to the lawsuits, not fully understanding what it was about. So we identified that these lawyers were preying upon people who have a poverty, a spiritual poverty and an economic poverty, as a result of many experiences — residential school being a major part of that — in their life. And that, really, the only winners in all this are going to be the lawyers.

M.A.: So those who suffered abuse or the consequences of abuse will not in fact benefit from the lawsuits?

D.B.: I don't know. Out of the legal court situation, there's no provision of long-term work for an individual to seek healing — and perhaps some of them aren't seeking that. So perhaps it's a short-term solution. It's what's available to all in Canadian society. Human rights and due process is court litigation. And lawyers are convincing enough, I guess, that that is the route you go, if there's no other action in town.

M.A.: Would it have been better for the government to have taken a different approach?

D.B.: What is now being looked at is Alternative Dispute Resolution. The church and government together are exploring the ADR process as an alternative way that is hopefully going to be more humane than the court system and is able to help provide mechanisms for healing. But that is moving very slowly.

There's some discussion happening now

about another alternative to litigation and ADR, and that is tribunal, which is a little more than the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. A tribunal would allow all parties to speak, all those who've been affected. That includes the former students, their families, former staff, and even government, to explain the policy. Many people don't know what the policy was all about and why the residential schools were established. You know, that's the biggest question that many of the former students have: Why did that happen? Why did I go through all that? What was all that about? And we're still trying to understand as a church what we were doing involved in that.

M.A.: How would you evaluate the response of the church to this challenge so far?

D.B.: I look at our history. Our national church got out of residential schools in 1969. And our church commissioned a report to General Synod called the Hendry report, *Beyond Traplines*. The Hendry report identified self-determination and treaty and land rights and industrial and environmental development, and so our church set out to find ways of being advocates and seeking justice in those areas.

And then in the early 1990s the legacy of residential schools really began to emerge, when a political leader in the First Nations community spoke out about his experience. The Anglican Church also began to pay attention to that. The church needed to hear those stories and bring to light the experience of those who attended Anglican schools. That began in 1991 and our Healing Fund was established in 1991. The apology of the primate of the national church came in 1993, and

'English and English only'

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ALASKA has been in the hands of native Alaskans essentially since the Russians sold the Great Land, as they call it, to the U.S. [in 1867]. It was the only institution in native hands because of the assimilationist policies of the U.S. government. [Then] the U.S. government, in a remarkable violation of the separation of church and state, assigned various Indian reservations to specific Protestant Christian bodies and paid the salaries of missionaries to carry out the civilizing task. Two of the key players in the social and educational assimilationist policy were Presbyterian ministers, S. Hall Young and Sheldon Jackson. Young wrote in his autobiography about the need to counter Orthodoxy's habit of using indigenous languages and customs.

"One strong stand," Young wrote, "— so far as I know I was the first to take it — was the determination to do no translating into any of the native dialects. I realized that the task of making an English-speaking race of these natives was much easier than the task of making a civilized and Christian language out of the native languages. We should let the old tongues with their superstitions and sins die, the sooner the better, and replace these languages with that of Christian civilization, and compel the natives in our schools to speak English and English only."

And in 1912, the U.S. government closed the Orthodox Church school, St. Paul's in the Aleutian Islands, for the crime of teaching Aleut. Let me give it to you straighter. In the words of one of the commissioners of education: "We have no higher calling in the world than to be missionaries to these people who have not yet achieved the Anglo-Saxon frame of mind."

Or, straighter yet, in a citation that I think is really raw in its exposure of the connections of commerce, racism, Protestant Christianity and assimilationist policies. This is from the official school philosophy promulgated in 1900 (Jackson headed the U.S. government's education policy in Alaska): "If the native population of Alaska can be brought under the influence of Christianity and be given a rudimentary English-language education, it follows that the white population [these are immigrants from the lower 48 states] could employ them in mining, transportation and the production of food."

Now this phrase, "brought under the influence of Christianity," is especially telling in that many of the native population were Orthodox Christians. But just this is another trait of the controlling narrative: That is to say, it consistently filters out, or declares as illegitimate or heretical, dissenting Christianities. ●

Larry Rasmussen (quoted with permission from his 1999 Kellogg Lectures at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass.).



a covenant regarding self-determination within the church came about in 1994. So indigenous Anglicans, working with the rest of the church, began to tell the story. But the story wasn't known generally. Canadians in general have been in denial about the history, so it's been a steep learning curve and a quick one in the past few years.

That experience is in the history of my family, as close to me as an uncle, but I never knew the stories. I knew of dysfunction and substance abuse. We internalize our anger and abuse ourselves and so we see that in our families, but we don't know why. I think that's part of the denial. We believed things about ourselves that were being taught in residential schools. Assimilation was a policy to do away with Indian people, and we internalized those views of us, and self-hatred and low self-esteem went to work at us. Those are the areas we try to respond to now through our work of healing and reconciliation.

One positive thing is a proposed increase in the Aboriginal Healing Fund that is administered here at the national church. The Aboriginal Healing Fund was established in 1991, and it has established an annual budget of \$100,000. That will be doubled come 2001.

The Canadian government needs to address the litigation situation so that we, the church, might be able to participate in the healing in the long run, rather than being put out of business in the short run. We want to continue to be around to work in bringing about justice, whether it's advocacy for land rights or treaty rights with the government, or education with the rest of Canadian society.

M.A.: Do you think that part of the reason the lawsuits have mushroomed the way they have at this time might have to do with anger or frustration over other issues, like treaty rights, that are harder to get a handle on or find a way to take to court?

D.B.: I think it is more basic than that. Because First Nations communities haven't been able to have those issues resolved, they have the highest unemployment, and so it gets down to an individual's basic situation and needs that, politically, the First Nations community is trying to find a resolution to. And they can't move in those areas until our treaties are upheld and government recognizes land rights and treaty rights, so that First Nations communities can be further self-determining and be involved in their communities' development. It comes down to the treaty, the land basis of a First Nations community, and how that affects an individual. Residential schools also identifies for an individual that they lost a culture and its values and its relationship to land. It's the land that gives a people their identity, who they are, what their economy is, what their society is. Residential schools displaced people in that relationship,

so they could not return, and if they did return there was nothing there to sustain them. Many former students are out in the cities, and have discovered that they don't have the skills to sustain themselves. When I first started doing this work I ran into many people who would say, I've been in and out of recovery programs for substance abuse and these conventional programs aren't working for me because I haven't felt validated. I think that's part of the frustration and the stereotyping that we face as Indian people. No one knows what our history is. Those individuals who are seeking healing and recovery don't have their experience validated because no one knows what they're talking about. We see racism and anger surfacing around fishing rights, logging, mining. When indigenous peoples are seeking their fair share of a particular industry, we run into conflict with other people who have a stake in that industry.

It's a vicious circle and out of that anger and frustration, it comes out this way. The tip of the iceberg is being focused on the residential schools. But the cultural genocide and loss of language and psychological abuse, all that is part of the other lawsuits that are there, and courts have not determined yet how to deal with that.

M.A.: Those issues are actually named in the lawsuits, but don't fit into a legal category?

D.B.: Right, or one that is what they call "compensable."

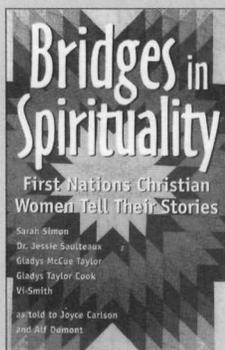
M.A.: Do you think there's a way in which the lawsuits might be helpful in bringing those issues to light and raising questions about attitudes and practices that persist in the dominant culture?

D.B.: One thing that the lawsuits have done is gotten everyone's attention. I guess this is a wakeup call for Canadians.

M.A.: What has this process been like for indigenous Canadians who are Anglicans?

D.B.: My own sense of this is through our national Council when we gather. Many of them are former students of residential schools. It's very complex to try and tell you what it's like for them, because they're very much part of the church, faithful people, but their families are hurting. They experience the legacy within their own families and their own communities, and they need to walk with those hurting people. We as a church need to respond and we need tools, we need skills, we need resources to help respond locally. ●

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of The Witness.

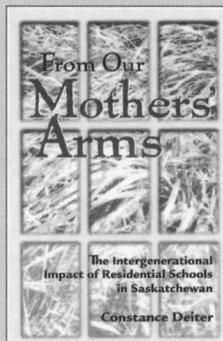


Bridges in Spirituality

First Nations Christian Women Tell Their Stories, Joyce Carlson and Alf Dumont, editors (Anglican Book Center/United Church Publishing House, 1997).

From Our Mothers' Arms

The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan by Constance Deiter (United Church Publishing, 1999).



In 1986, on behalf of the United Church of Canada, its Moderator made a formal apology to native people for the role of the church in the missionary destruction of their cultures. In 1993, Canada's Anglican Archbishop offered a similar apology, naming, in particular, the church's role in the administration of residential schools.

These two books are intended as part of the work which repentance demands. They are efforts to listen to the voices and stories of native people and to grant those voices a wider hearing.

The first, *Bridges in Spirituality*, comprises the oral histories of five church women, some with liturgical authority (one the first to offer communion in the Ojibwe language), others clergy spouses, all active church leaders in their own right. The "bridge" concerns their gift and capacity to combine the Gospel and given ecclesiastical structures with the traditional ways, creatively giving form to the one with the other.

There is included, for example, the invocation of the elders of the four directions in connection with a native baptismal. These women tend to have as graceful a facility with Scripture as with the old traditions and the two move in and out of one another in their hearts and words.

The second volume is more narrowly focused on the residential schools of Saskatchewan. It, too, works from oral histories, in this case of the author's own family members.

The consequential effects of the residential system which it documents are devastating. Perhaps emblematic is a schoolwall mural which is described, whereupon white priests pause on a staircase leading to heaven while native people in traditional dress are represented going off to hell.

The consequences were indeed hellish for native children. Citing the work of Alice Miller, the internationally noted child psychologist, Deiter is able, with a substantial theoretical foundation, to read the evidence of this poisonous pedagogy, this assault on family, this loss of parenting as issuing in the whole range of obsessive-compulsive disorders: alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, overeating — just to name a few.

Teasing stories out from behind denial, it also narrates humor and, above all, resistance. The latter includes, on the one hand, the direct burning down of certain residential schools or, on the other, the development of Indian sign language as a subversive method of student communication, "silenced" and behind the back (or under the very noses) of teachers.

An appendix outlines the United Church's formation and administration of a Healing Fund. Given the scale and consequences of this well-intentioned horror, at \$1 million it seems underfunded.

— Bill Wylie-Kellermann is *The Witness*' book review editor.

LAND REFORM IN EL

'The land without Indians is worthless'

by Richard A. Bower

LA TIERRA SIN INDIOS NO VALE NADA. The land without Indians is worthless. This was the attitude of the Spanish colonials from the earliest days, shaping the long tradition of struggle and suffering of the native populations, and later of the *mestizo campesino*, the rural peasant of El Salvador. Immediately on taking possession of Central America, the Spanish crown, supported by the sword (military) and the cross (the church), began a process of land acquisition and oppression, leaving wounds that still affect the majority of Salvadorans.

To encourage colonization, the Spanish king gave large blocks of land to Spanish settlers. The settlers had dreams of immediate wealth and little stomach for the hard work of developing the land for production. For this reason the colonials said they wouldn't accept the land without also receiving enough natives to work the land. This process of giving land along with indentured indigenous people to work the land was called *La encomienda*.

La Encomienda — land and indentured workers

La Encomienda guaranteed that the best and richest of the land would remain in the hands of the few, and that a whole culture of poor, landless peasants would emerge over the centuries. And in El Salvador the impact of *La encomienda* still lasts.

Here, in the most densely populated country in Central America, the bulk of the population lives a rural, agricultural life. Eighty percent of the cultivatable land is in the hands of 2 percent of the people, the oligarchy, the coffee growers, the so-called 14 Families (in reality, more like 100). Even in the 21st century, El Salvador functions like a medieval fiefdom: an old landed oligarchy, supported by a strong military, chaplained by a conservative, hierarchical Roman Catholic Church, still living on the coffee *haciendas* and ruling the large *latifundios*. For over 500 years little has changed.

The coastal, Pacific plains of El Salvador are fertile and rich. Most of the large-production crops are grown there: cotton (which used to be king), sugar cane, fruits of all kind, maguay, from whose fibers ropes are made, and *añil* from which comes a valuable purple dye.

In the early 1930s a peasant insurrection, led by a child of the oligarchy, Farabundo Martí, nearly overthrew the military government supported by the oligarchy. In revenge, General and President Maximiliano Martínez slaughtered over 30,000 native Salvadorans and peasants in less than three months. At the heart of the rebellion was

the issue of the just distribution of land. In this repression, Martínez had the support of the oligarchy, the church — and the U.S.

From that time onward, even today, the poor, if they have land, live and work their small *milpas* (parcels of land) in the highlands, the steep, rocky and lifeless soils of Chalatenango, Las Cabañas and Morazán. Meanwhile, the landed families produce products for export, not for feeding the people: coffee, cotton, cane (e.g., rum), and sometimes fruit and vegetables for local and foreign consumption. The *campesinos* do the best that can be done, raising corn and beans on the dry hillsides, often losing even what little land they have traditionally worked (without holding legal title) when the larger landowners for whom they previously worked in serf-like conditions expropriate it (with government support).

Base communities and organizing

The 1960s and 1970s were times of growing threat. Union organizers, Catholic workers and Christian base communities organized rural communities and agricultural cooperatives to, at first, improve the living conditions of the *campesinos* and then to redress the government for failures to protect these workers' limited rights.

When the oligarchy awoke to this activity, they began a campaign of severe oppression toward the *campesinos* and organized workers. Governments fell if they showed the least interest in responding to the needs of the poor. In 1977 President (General) Arturo Armando Molina issued a land reform proclamation, which (under pressure) never left the page it was printed on. By January 10, 1981, after three years of back-and-forth fighting between the government and several opposition groups, the first FMLN (a coalition of six or seven of these groups) armed offensive changed civil unrest to civil war. In 1984, under the leadership of moderate President Napolian Duarte, a very progressive land reform legislation was passed. Hopes were soon dashed, brutally in many places, when signals were sent to the landowners that neither the military nor the courts would enforce the agrarian reforms. In the tensions that followed, the war escalated.

As in the beginning, so now. The landed oligarchy demanded low-paid, passive and submissive workers for the land. *La tierra sin indios no vale nada* was still a reality of the early 1980s.

The Peace Accords — land to combatants

After the Peace Accords of 1992, two remarkable things happened.

SALVADOR

The first was that the accords required land distribution to all of the decommissioned fighters, both members of the Salvadoran military and of the FMLN, the revolutionaries. This was done in 1993, with parcels taken from the holdings of the oligarchy sufficient for subsistence farming.

The other thing that happened was that the old landed families, for the time at least, had little concern for the land that remained in their control. They had discovered the international money markets, neo-liberal economics, the privatization of government services, and were financially doing quite well through the banks they owned and the foreign investments they made. The rich landowners produced no cotton for export in the years 1995–1999. In addition, because of the free-tariff trading between Guatemala and El Salvador, merchants found it was cheaper to import Guatemalan fruits and vegetables (and often meat) than it was to pay the new, inexperienced, El Salvadoran farmers to produce them. Good land lay barren and there was no government to provide technical and financial support to help the new farmers change the situation.

During the years of 1996–1999, many of the newly landed ex-combatants began selling their land, feeling that the money would be worth more than the continued struggle to stay afloat as small farmers. Little by little the land (purchased cheaply) returned to the original owners, legally and publicly. These people are now, once again, beginning to produce crops for export.

In the mountains, where the land is less productive, the *campesino* have been able to retain the land. With the help of U.S. aid, some of this newly acquired land is being surveyed and registered to protect the small farmers. But still, the land is very difficult to cultivate: It is like trying to farm in rocky northern New England, without the promise of rain.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, strong organizations and popular education strengthened the hand of small rural communities. Cooperative endeavors abounded. There is little of that now — most were destroyed during the final years of the war. Through heroic efforts some new agricultural cooperatives have been formed among the poor, despite quiet opposition by the government and conservative church leaders. But they are minimal, with little economic support. The war has also changed the culture, especially among the *campesinos*. This group is far more individualistic and disheartened that it was in the early war years. Community organizations and Christian base communities, the energy and life of the poor in the 1960s and 1970s, have mostly disappeared. Some are trying to reemerge, but with much difficulty.

Except for the developing service and financial economic sectors, El Salvador remains basically an agricultural country, the vast percentage of people depending heavily on the land and its produce.



Dona Teresita in her rural kitchen in El Salvador.

Recent governmental proposals for agricultural reform are focused primarily on the large producers of export crops. Little has changed over the generations. The few see their ownership of the land as their right and privilege, while the many eke out their living on the gleanings left over. As always, land reform — justice in the use and production of the earth's resources — is an urgent issue of stewardship and of equity.

Anglican Church response

The Anglican Church of El Salvador's response, as it has been since the 1980s, has been to provide a voice for those without voice, a community that has struggled to provide assistance, training and community organization for the rural *campesino*. In the 1980s, the Salvadoran Anglican Church, with the help of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief (now called Episcopal Development and Relief), operated an agriculture training school, *El Maizal*, in the region of *La Libertad*, until it was closed down because of the intensity of the war. The church was also instrumental in founding CREDHO, an organization, now autonomous, for the training and organizing of rural cooperatives.

During the war years humanitarian money flowed from the U.S. and Europe to support efforts like these. Sadly, little of that support continues. The focus is on the globalized economy, not on micro interests such as rural cooperative farming.

In El Salvador, a country with more than 5 million inhabitants living together on a small parcel of land the size of West Virginia, people continue to live poorly on the land or, fleeing to the cities, even poorer in urban *barrios populares*. The Maya, the ancient native people of the area now comprising Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, believed and practiced that the land and its fruits belonged to all the people. Now the land, for centuries distributed as royal patronage among the rich, remains the property of the few, the land and forests ravished by greed, a sore that erupts in civil war century after century. ●

Richard Bower is a member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company's board of directors (ECPC publishes The Witness).

CHIAPAS' LONG STRU

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Chiapas, Mexico: Members of the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

'You can't talk about the Gospel without addressing people's miserable poverty'

by Camille Colatosti

"I want there to be democracy, no more inequality — I am looking for a life worth living, liberation, just like God says." — JOSÉ PEREZ (EZLN militiaman, captured at Oxchuc, Jan. 4, 1994)

ON JANUARY 1, 1994, 3,000 members of the mostly indigenous Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) captured the city of San Cristobal, Mexico, the capital of Chiapas, one of the country's poorest states. On the border with Guatemala, 50 to 90 percent of the people here speak a Mayan language, making it "Mexico's Indian heartland," according to Harvard's John Womack, Jr., author of *Rebellion in Chiapas* (The New Press, 1999).

While 14,000 Mexican troops forced a Zapatista retreat from Cristobal on January 2 and by January 12 a ceasefire had been declared, many say that peace has never been reached and that the Zapatista rebellion has shaped the region.

According to Womack, the cause of the rebellion is "an age-old problem," with the wealthy using all the power available to it "to squeeze every bit of labor and every bit of money it can out of the poor people who are the great majority there and who also happen to be of Mayan descent."

A long history of poverty

Chiapas covers almost 29,000 square miles and has a population of over 3.2 million. Of all of Mexico's states, it is the most agricul-

tural, with coffee and cattle as its major crops. A poor state, the average per capita annual income is \$2,000–\$3,000, compared to \$5,000 nationally and \$30,000 in some northern states. Fifty-four percent of the people in Chiapas are malnourished.

The infrastructure of Chiapas is also severely lacking. While 55 percent of Mexico's electricity is generated from Chiapas, only about 20 percent of homes in Chiapas have electricity.

Chiapas also has the worst education in the country — 72 out of 100 children do not finish the first grade. More than half of the schools offer only a third-grade education. Half of the schools have only one teacher for all the courses offered. In 1989, there were 16,058 classrooms in Mexico, and only 96 were in indigenous zones.

The poverty of Chiapas has roots that go back to the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The conquest led to the mass enslavement of Indians, even though slavery was technically illegal.

By the 19th century, great *haciendas* of sugar and sisal — a cactus-like plant whose fibers are used to make rope, rugs and other goods — employed thousands of pauperized workers, most of whom remained bound to wealthy planters by unpayable debts.

Rebellion in Chiapas also has a long history. In 1545, the first Catholic bishop of Chiapas, Bartolome de las Casas, protested the exploitation of the native population. In 1712, indigenous people tried to overthrow the *hacienda* system. From 1810–21, Mexicans fought to win their independence from

Spain. Then, 100 years later, Mexicans fought again, waging the Mexican Revolution, which overthrew a dictatorship and promised liberal reforms that would eliminate poverty and provide education, health care and land for all, but, according to Womack, these promises went largely unrealized. Inequality and poverty remained, especially among indigenous peoples.

Nevertheless, an article of the Mexican Constitution (adopted in 1917, after the revolution) did change the shape of Chiapas. Article 27 recognized villages as corporate bodies entitled to tenure in agricultural lands and guaranteed grants of federal or expropriated private lands — *ejidos* — to villages that needed them. This article inspired many to move into the jungles of Chiapas to form villages.

Groups of landless neighbors would find grantable land, occupy it, secure the perimeter, and declare a community. They would fight to protect the land and petition for official recognition. Once recognized, they would petition for an *ejido*.

By 1960, the jungle was transformed with new remote villages which largely functioned with political autonomy. They ruled themselves through town meetings and village assemblies. However, they failed to achieve economic independence. Without a real plan, most newly formed villages grew coffee or raised cattle, and so remained subject to the large export markets.

Continued poverty and inequality contributed to widespread popular unrest.



Pro-EZLN graffiti on the poverty-stricken streets of San Cristobal, Chiapas, Mexico

January 1, 1994: NAFTA and Zapatistas

Tensions and repression increased in 1994 in response to two crises, crises from which Chiapas — and perhaps Mexico as a whole — has not recovered.

The U.S., Mexican and Canadian governments initiated the first crisis. It came in the form of economic policy — the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This agreement, which took effect January 1, 1994, removed all agricultural tariffs. This effectively lowered the price of Mexican crops and lowered both payments to Mexico's poorest producers and wages to the country's poorest workers. The value of corn, for instance, fell dramatically. Even worse for Mexican farmers, U.S. corn can be sold in Mexico at 60 percent of the cost of the Mexican crop. NAFTA also paved the way for abuse of the environment. Logging corporations, such as Boise Cascade, now have unregulated access to exploit the forests.

But most controversial of all was Mexico's

repeal of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, the article making communal lands — *ejidos* — available to villagers and protecting communal land holdings from privatization.

The second crisis of 1994 was, say many, precipitated by NAFTA. That was the rebellion on January 1 by the Zapatistas. When 3,000 armed members of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) descended on Chiapas' capital of San Cristobal, they declared war on the Mexican army. Their aims, clearly stated in their declaration, were to overthrow the Mexican government. A key reason for this action, they explained, was to implement land reform. The leaders were largely indigenous and fought for a better life in Chiapas. For this reason, their cause was seen with general sympathy throughout the country.

The fact that the Zapatistas were extreme underdogs may also have led many to view them with sympathy. The invasion came as a surprise to the Mexican government, but

within 24 hours, 14,000 Mexican troops forced a Zapatista retreat. By January 12, a ceasefire was declared and peace talks began.

The peace negotiations centered on what has come to be called "the Indian question," not the attempted government overthrow. While the EZLN may have wanted to take over Mexico, they soon realized that this goal was unrealistic.

In 1996, about one-and-one-half-years after negotiations began, an agreement was reached — the San Andres Accords — which committed the government to giving Indian communities more autonomy. But the Mexican congress never ratified the agreement.

Military occupation — and faith-based resistance

Instead, the government has waged low-intensity warfare in Chiapas. The bulk of the army — a total of almost 80,000 troops — has gradually moved into the state, three times the level of occupation at the beginning of the conflict. Chiapas contains a combined total of 300 barracks, camps and checkpoints.

"In Chiapas, there are 20 to 25 military vehicles that pass through different roads where I live and control all the means of transportation," says Manuel Hernandez Aguilar, an indigenous Mayan from a grass-roots faith community called *El Pueblo Creyente* (People of Faith). "When we go out, they ask us for ID and treat us as if we are foreigners in our land — but we are the ones who are the original people of this land."

Aguilar presents an example of the kind of leader and the kind of movement that had been building in modern Chiapas since the 1960s. *El Pueblo Creyente* is an organization of Catholic lay people who gather to share common experiences, and to oppose repression of local indigenous Mayan communities.

"My principal work," explains Aguilar, "is to wake our people up to what's happening. We want people to reflect on what the Gospel means to them. This is not just a spiritual evangelism, though. We also deal with human needs — and how Jesus worked hard to meet the needs of the poor and change their situation.

"We carry out our work so that people

aren't left behind and forgotten. We want our church to be alive, not dead. Our church announces the good that happens and denounces the bad.

"Our work has much to do with poverty, because there is a lot of poverty. You can't talk about the Gospel without addressing people's miserable poverty."

Aguilar also works with a group of organizations that are independent from the church, ARIC (the Rural Association of Collective Interests). As he explains, "These are independent and democratic, and put into action the reflections that we do in our faith groups. ARIC is looking for an end to this poverty. But this work is not looked upon well by government authorities."

Aguilar continues, "Because we carry out this work, our diocese is persecuted. Our Bishop Samuel Ruiz was threatened with death and there was an attempt on the lives of many leaders for the work we do with the living Gospel."

Since 1995, government authorities backed by the ruling PRI party have closed 35 churches and chapels in Chiapas. In 1998, Mexico deported Thomas Hansen of Pastors for Peace and Miguel Chanteau, a French Catholic priest. Chanteau, who worked in Chiapas for 30 years and was a close associate of Ruiz, had criticized the Mexican government for its violence toward indigenous people.

Paramilitary violence: the Acteal massacre

In addition to the army, Chiapas is plagued with numerous paramilitary troops, organized by both the cattle barons and the army. The paramilitary has been reportedly responsible for numerous human rights abuses, from searching homes without warrants, to stealing livestock and food, to erecting arbitrary roadblocks, to rapes and murders.

A year ago, Asna Jahanjir, a United Nations official assigned to monitor the status of human rights in Chiapas, reported that "extra-judicial executions are widespread and ongoing. Entire communities are forced to flee to makeshift refugee camps."

One of the worst incidents to take place since the 1994 rebellion is the Acteal massacre, in which 45 civilians were killed on

December 12, 1997.

Kerry Appel, director of the Human Bean Company, a fair-trade coffee company based in Denver, was in Acteal at the time of the massacre and witnessed the killings. He has been traveling to Mexico for 30 years, buying coffee directly from producers in Chiapas and then selling it in the U.S. Because he eliminates the middleman, or "coyote," he pays producers about \$1.50 a pound for their coffee instead of the usual 40 cents. Acteal is a Tzotzil Indian village where the coffee for the Human Bean Company is grown.

"Women and children fled down the steep mountain path toward the valley, as armed men shot them from behind," Appel recounts. "Some who reached the underbrush by the river below were discovered by the assassins when the babies' cries gave them away. ... The assassins cut open the stomach of a young pregnant woman, tore her unborn baby out and cut it up. A baby less than one year old survived because her mother covered her with her own body and received all the bullets. One baby was shot in the head at close range.

"The massacre went on for almost five hours ... while dozens of armed civil guards stood on the road above and did nothing.

"In the end, 45 of Human Bean's coffee producers had been massacred and as many as 5,000 were refugees in the Tzotzil community of Pohlo."

Later, Appel learned that there was no coffee available for him to buy. "The same Mexican-government-backed paramilitary groups that had committed the massacre ... then stole the coffee of the dead and the refugees to sell it," he says.

The coffee processing plant in Acteal — where Human Bean coffee is processed — was then occupied by the Mexican army, an action that would have been unthinkable when the Mexican constitutions' autonomy-promoting Article 27 had been in effect. Dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the government had become aggressively intolerant of the independent villages of Chiapas, villages that had been independent, in some cases, since their founding.

Election defeats for the PRI

The decision of the PRI to crack down on

those who seek autonomy may have ultimately led to its defeat in the latest round of national elections.

In last July's presidential elections, opposition candidate Vicente Fox defeated the PRI favorite—the first time in 71 years that the PRI lost its hold on the presidency. Likewise, the PRI lost the governorship of Chiapas to opposition candidate Pablo Salazar, an independent representing an alliance of parties including Fox's National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution, which supports the Zapatistas. Salazar helped negotiate the 1996 peace accords.

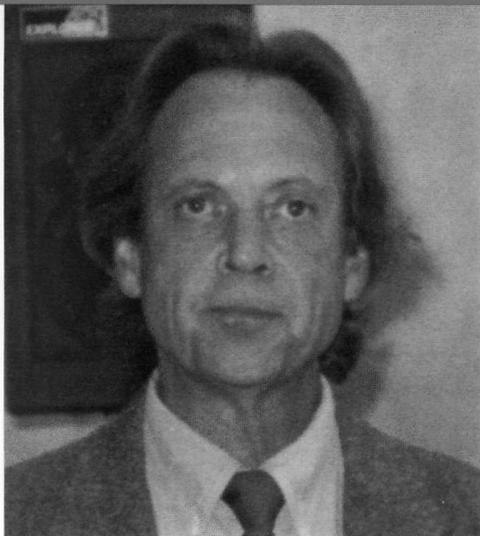
Fox says he is willing to respect the San Andres Accords. During his campaign, he also said that he could resolve the Chiapas conflict in "15 minutes." He promised to withdraw the army to its pre-1994 positions.

But very quickly Fox seemed to be having second thoughts. In October 2000, he suggested that "an army pullout might not happen prior to an accord," and would happen only when "law and order" have been established.

As Womack puts it, "I don't think elections solve very much, but they do something. The fact that the PRI lost the election in Chiapas doesn't mean that all the bad guys are gone and only good guys will run things, but the wealthy have lost some of the official leverage that they used to have. They haven't lost property by any means — but things have changed."

Still, he continues, "the people in Mexico need to continue what they have been doing for many years: figuring out what really are the obstacles to their own popular organizations and trying to organize around those obstacles, to undermine them. They need to put together formal organizations in the economy as producers, consumers, credit cooperatives — develop their own material base and use that base to develop formal political organizations that can provide them protection. This can happen only from local places and spread from each local place. It can't be dictated from above. It has to come from popular organizing — and that is the work of a lifetime." ●

Camille Colatosti is The Witness' staff writer.



To fight a 21st-century Indian killer

by Owanah Anderson

PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II, diabetes was virtually unknown among the Native American population. After 1940 diabetes became “epidemic” among many tribes.

Today, diabetes is a vicious 21st-century Indian killer. National statistics show that Indians are hit four times harder than the general population.

Among Pima Indians in southern Arizona, 50 percent of persons over 35 years of age have diabetes. In some tribes in Oklahoma more than 40 percent of persons 60–64 years old have the disease. In all, about 60,000 of the 2.2 million American Indians/Alaska Natives who receive health care from Indian Health Care facilities throughout the nation are known to have diabetes.

Every American history student knows that American Indians had no immunity to simple childhood diseases, such as measles, that came with European explorers and wiped out entire villages and nations of native peoples. But why, in the last half century, has diabetes taken such a deadly toll among today’s native peoples?

Mark Butterbrodt, a tall lanky Harvard-educated physician teaching pediatrics at the University of Minnesota, asked himself that

question and decided to try out some theories.

Of Norwegian descent, Butterbrodt grew up in the northeast corner of South Dakota, next door to the Sisseton-Wahpeton reservation, in an era when the chasm that separated the native and non-native populations of border towns was even more pronounced than it is today. (As recently as 1999, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held public hearings on race relations in Rapid City, S.D. and emphatically reported racism there to be rampant.)

“It was through the wisdom and character of one man, Vine Deloria Sr., that I traversed that chasm as an adolescent,” says Butterbrodt. Deloria, an Episcopal priest, was a member of the proud Sioux family of priests and poets, authors and advocates that has spanned three generations of distinction in a land often teeming with malevolence.

“Beyond my genuine respect for the inner character and spirituality of Indian people, my lifelong connection with them has been bolstered by the Episcopal Church, the Lakota/Dakota (Sioux) language and the wonderful old Lakota Hymnal,” he says.

“My family had been Episcopalian for three generations before I was born,” Butterbrodt adds. His great-grandfather, a Norwegian immigrant, had left the Lutheran Church to become Episcopalian “because the latter was much less strait-laced about the temperance movement.” Butterbrodt’s father, a pharmacist, was a linguist who spoke excellent Dakota and young Mark mastered the language early in life.

Historically, the Episcopal Church played a major role in the lives of the Sisseton-Wahpeton band. Driven out of Minnesota in 1863, the impoverished band would likely have starved to death had it not been for Bishop Henry Whipple, who relentlessly badgered the U.S. Congress for financial assistance (which the bishop, himself, administered). Large numbers of the band converted or at least supplemented their traditional religious ethos with Episcopalian Christianity.

Butterbrodt recalls long summer evenings spent on the lawn of St. John’s Church at the rural hamlet of Brown’s Valley listening intently to the legendary “Father Vine,” a renowned storyteller. Attending the annual Niobrara Convocations, a gathering of Episcopalian Indians from across South Dakota, remains an endearing memory.

After graduating from a small South Dakota high school, Butterbrodt did his undergraduate work at Harvard. “I was Harvard’s ‘token hick,’” he says. He returned to his native state for medical studies and finished his medical degree at the University of Minnesota.

He was recruited to come back home to do his “pay-back” stint, to pay off expenses of medical school. His assignment with the Indian Health Service (IHS) was on the Yankton Sioux reservation, in the southern part of the state. “I did not start out with some sort of mission-driven, noble notion about being the good white doctor serving impoverished native peoples,” he muses. “In fact, I was

A'S VOCATION

strongly drawn to academic medicine and figured when my 'pay-back' stint was taken care of, I'd return to the University of Minnesota."

Such was not the case. He would not return to Minneapolis until after seven years and several assignments on various Sioux reservations and facilities. It was in Rapid City in 1984 that his tie with Sioux people was further strengthened. He was working at Sioux Sanitarium in Rapid City and became close friends with several Pine Ridge people. Among those Lakota friends were John and Flossie Bear Robe, who lost a son about Mark's age in an automobile accident. The Bear Robes informed him they were taking him to replace their son. "It was no formal adoption," he said, "but I have since felt very much a part of their family."

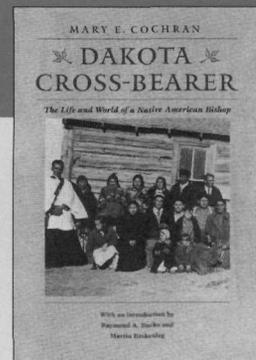
Butterbrodt became a part of the congregation at St. Matthew's, the predominantly Indian church in Rapid City. Here he became quite proficient in singing from the Lakota Hymnal — after serious coaching from Christine Prairie Chicken and Marie Rogers and other elders. It was the Lakota Hymnal, in fact, that became a powerful icon to him at a moment in his life when he was testing professional options. He had to make a decision whether to accept an offer to enter private practice, accept a fellowship for doctoral work at University of Minnesota or remain with IHS. While visiting a friend in Los Angeles, he visited a museum and stumbled on to an Indian exhibit. His attention quickly focused on a worn old Lakota Hymnal with a beaded cover. The Hymnal was open to hymn 167 — "Guide Us, Oh Thou Great Jehovah." Legend says this was the favorite hymn of Philip J. Deloria, the priest-father of Vine Deloria, Sr. and grandfather of the renowned author, Vine Deloria, Jr. The hymn, according to legend, had figured largely in the proud young chieftain's conversion to Christianity.

Butterbrodt chose to remain focused on Indians. As he did so, the reality of the toll of diabetes on his patients began to occupy his mind.

He returned to Minneapolis with a Bush Foundation fellowship for coursework at the University of Minnesota. A professor spoke of the theory surrounding the "thrifty gene." This not-proven theory suggests that hunter-gatherer peoples were able to effectively store fat. The fat was then used during periods of famine. "People who make a rapid transition from nomadic or physically demanding lives to a more sedentary, inactive lifestyle with a steady food supply, appear to be more susceptible to obesity and diabetes," says Butterbrodt.

"Before the second World War, Indians were certainly more involved in physical labor," says Butterbrodt. "Rural women had few household conveniences. Simply to put a meal together required physical labor — from gardening to gathering. Men were often day laborers, ranchers or farmers. All the children had chores requiring far more physical activity than watching TV."

Dakota Cross-Bearer:
The Life and World of a Native American Bishop by Mary E. Cochrane, with an Introduction by Raymond A. Bucko and Martin Brokenleg (University of Nebraska Press, 2000).



IN *DAKOTA CROSS-BEARER*, Mary Cochrane (wife of an Episcopal priest who worked on the Standing Rock Reservation before being named bishop of Alaska) chronicles the life of Harold S. Jones, a Dakota who became the first Native American bishop in the Christian church.

As Brokenleg and Bucko write by way of introduction, "*Dakota Cross-Bearer* provides an apology for Christianity alongside a healthy critique of church policies and practices. At the same time, it steadfastly maintains a respect for traditional religious practices and beliefs."

Based on extensive interviews with Jones, then carefully researched and written, the biography Cochrane has produced in many ways reads like a memoir, a geography of stories in the style of a Dakota storyteller.

Since his tenure as bishop was brief (he suffered a stroke in the autumn of 1972, just months after his consecration), the thread of the story concerns his upbringing by grandparents on the Santee Reservation in Nebraska, his seminary training at Seabury-Western, and assignments in various communities across the plains: Wounded Knee, Oglala, Cheyenne River Reservation, and Navaholand Area Mission. Running throughout, like a recurring spiritual landmark, is the Niobrara Convocation, a large yearly gathering of Episcopalians drawn from all the Dakota and Lakota communities, which he first attended with his grandparents. And the narrative is often punctuated with refrains from Dakota hymns, which clearly echo in his heart and summon memory and moment.

"Cross-bearer," of the title, carries a double weight of meaning. It is, of course, a liturgical reference to the one who leads the procession into and out of worship. But the mark of discipleship and burden of the cross are implied above all. Cochrane has made the point that the Way which Jones has walked has not been without cost. ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is The Witness' book review editor.

Such observations led Butterbrodt to believe diabetes could be preventable among native people with a consistent and conscientious effort to revert to a pre-war lifestyle of food consumption and physical activity. "If we could get involved early with children, could we prevent diabetes altogether?" he pondered.

He wrote a proposal and the American Academy of Pediatrics gave him a \$5,000 start-up grant. He departed a comfortable urban life in Minneapolis and set out for the Pine Ridge Reservation, located 90 miles from the nearest Office Depot or Target store. The reservation, home of the Oglala Sioux (or Lakota) Indians, is centered in Shannon County, the poorest county of the U.S. and, except for Haiti, has the shortest life expectancy of the western hemisphere.

Pine Ridge Reservation is noted for contentiousness, clique conflict and bitter memories. It was on this desolate reservation that the appalling massacre of Wounded Knee, in which 369 Sioux Indians were mercilessly slaughtered, occurred in 1890. And it was here, in 1973, that fierce inter-tribal conflict surfaced with the 71-day occupation of Wounded Knee.

"I came to Pine Ridge in 1995, fully expecting to get the program launched and return to Minneapolis in about three months," says the sandy-haired Butterbrodt. He is now entering his sixth year at work on the reservation.

The lynchpin of the project to illustrate how diabetes could be prevented was to screen children for risk of diabetes and to go into homes with training on nutrition and exercise.

From the onset, Butterbrodt sought to encourage and enable community ownership of the diabetes project. To achieve acceptance, he drew from all aspects of his background — his knowledge of the language and respect for the character of Sioux people and his involvement in the Episcopal Church that once had 38 churches, chapels and mission stations on Pine Ridge.

Within a month he had a community board for the clinic. Acceptance for both the project and for him personally was promptly forthcoming. Staff soon included Darleen Bear Killer as coordinator and Mike He Crow

as Community Health Representative. Pine Ridge people have been trained to do screening; Lakota-speaking people are trained to make home visits.

Also an aspect of the diabetes prevention program was a vigilant blending of traditional healing practices with western medicine. Spokespersons for the program soon included persons such as the Oglala elder, Rick Two Dogs, whose grandfather knew Crazy Horse. Two Dogs was trained by elders and is connected by spiritual practices to the use of herbs and ceremonies to achieve traditional healing.

Butterbrodt's staff included a certified diabetes educator and nutritionist who urged communities to provide nutritious school lunches and physical education in school curricula. Families were taught how to use "commodity foods" effectively.

Before long, kindergarteners were walking a mile a day and grandmothers were pumping iron at the school gym (after program staff was able to get schools to stay open after school hours for community use of facilities).

Every schoolchild on the Pine Ridge Reservation — 4,000 in all — has been screened. The project has identified 500 at highest risk. More than 800 home visits have been made to teach nutrition practices.

"A primary result of the project has been to educate families that diabetes is preventable, not inevitable," Butterbrodt says. "A secondary result is that we have demonstrated that positive lifestyles can change and improve longevity even in settings where there are so many obstacles to a healthy lifestyle."

The diabetes prevention project now funded by IHS employs 30 tribal members. Butterbrodt has "kicked back" and, while serving as unpaid medical adviser for the project, is working full-time with IHS and raising his adopted 14-year-old son, an Ojibwa from Red Lake Reservation of Minnesota. ●

Owanah Anderson, who lives in Wichita Falls, Tex., is of the Choctaw nation of Oklahoma. She is a member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company board of directors (ECPC owns The Witness).

'Peace tents' in the Mideast

Grassroots peace initiatives are springing up in Israel, according to an American lawyer and writer living near Tel Aviv.

"Peace tents' have been cropping up on highways where Jews and Arabs drop in to try to resume normal dialogue," writes Helen Schary Motro in *The Christian Science Monitor* (10/31/00). "The first was in the northern Galilee, where some of the worst Arab-Jewish violence had taken place, including involvement of the Arab village Arrare, where two Israeli Arabs had been killed. Yet even the peace tents have not been spared random vigilante violence.

"One 'peace tabernacle' set up by the Arab villages of Tira and Taibe, in cooperation with the Jewish towns of Tzur Yigal and Kohav Yair was torched; but the next morning, activists began to rebuild it atop the ashes. Eighty-five Jews and Arabs put a joint announcement in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper calling for an end to violence. There are vigils, peace walks and, last weekend, a binational demonstration in the mixed-population city of Haifa."

Globalization and women's voices

A recent issue of *Media and Gender Monitor* reported on a group of women writers gathered in India for workshops on gender and censorship. Asked how globalization has affected women's freedom of speech, Ritu Menon of India said that "in India, we are now flooded with MTV, American melodrama and sitcoms, inane talk shows, programming that is 'global' and often has very little to do with what's happening locally, and the highlighting of the woman-as-object in addition to woman-as-consumer — both masquerading as the liberated woman. India is obsessed with beauty pageants, with Miss World, Miss Universe, Miss Smooth Elbow, Miss Long Legs — you name it — via magazines like *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Femina* and *Bride*. Conservatism cloaked as commerce, commerce pretending to be free choice, while genuine freedom of choice recedes far-

ther and farther. At least earlier we knew to whom to direct our protest. Now, it's a distant corporate entity and, even though we may know the name, we have no access to it. The only real choice left is to switch off. Tune out. And continue to protest."

Sanja Sarnavka of Croatia spoke about women's need "to find mechanisms of preserving our identity and authenticity" in the face of media onslaught. Quoting the statistic that "almost 80 percent of the total news flow emanates from West-based major transnational agencies," Sarnavka noted "a considerable threat of homogenization, and the loss of self-perception, as well as a loss of independent perceptions of the world."

Patricia Flores of Bolivia reported that "globalization has commercialized media and this has resulted in more sexism and sensationalism. In Bolivia we are recipients of endless talk shows from Peru, Argentina and the U.S.A.

"These involve mostly women, ranging from young girls, teenagers, mothers. Issues that are raised on these talk shows, like domestic violence, become almost topics of entertainment as they are exploited to the limits of scandal and sensationalism. In the present climate, women's voices are heard only when what they say can be distorted and sensationalized, when what they have to say helps to increase ratings."

'Don't kill your first patient'

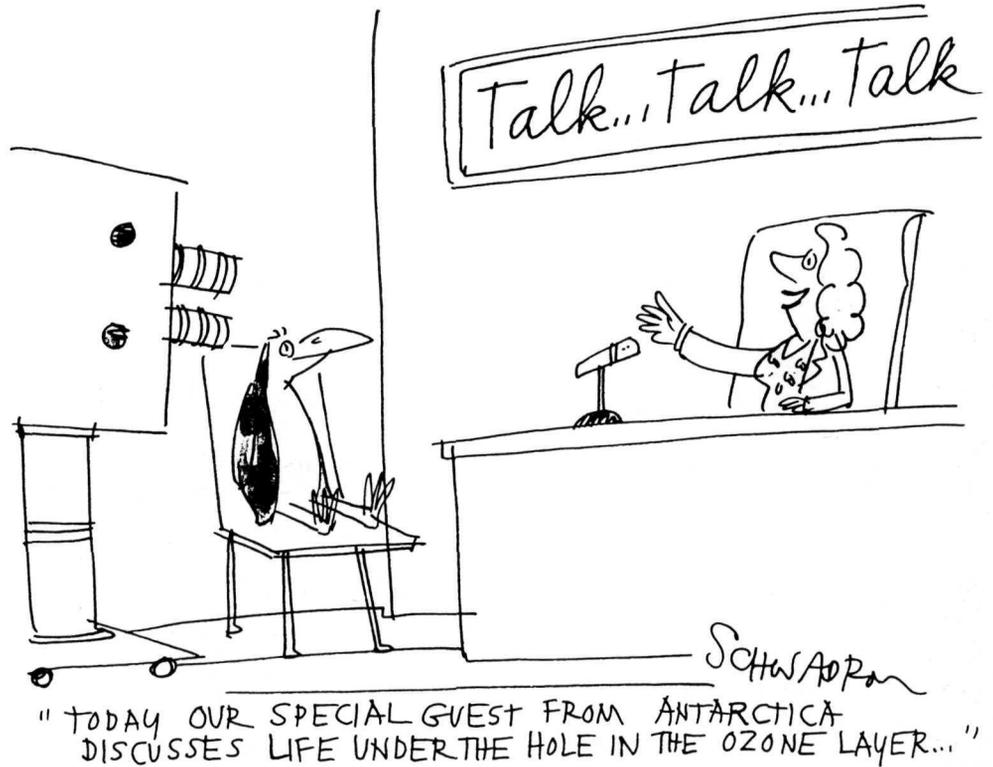
Ads featuring Bill Maher of "Politically Incorrect" are being placed in student newspapers at medical schools that continue to use dogs and other animals in labs. Telling students, "Don't kill your first patient," the ads explain that more than half of all North American medical schools have dropped animal labs from their curricula in favor of better, less expensive teaching alternatives.

According to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, which is spearheading a campaign to end the use of live animals in medical training, just 46 of the 126 U.S. medical schools continue this practice. PCRM is most strongly targeting UCLA,

Boston University, St. Louis University, the University of Colorado and the University of California, San Diego. PCRM asks that letters be sent to these schools asking them to replace live animal labs with modern, more humane alternatives. They are also looking for volunteers who live near the schools to distribute literature. For more information, call 202-686-2210, ext. 329.

Belgian sustainability

Belgium recently announced a comprehensive sustainable development plan based on goals set at the 1992 U.N. Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (*Grist Magazine*, 10/25/00). The plan includes a goal of increasing the number of organic farms in the country by 60 percent a year for the next four years, with the aim of having at least 4 percent of the country's agricultural land farmed organically. By the year 2010, it also aspires to cut energy consumption in the country to 10 percent below 1990 levels, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7.5 percent, and provide 2 percent of the country's power through renewable energy, while gradually phasing out nuclear power.



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A classroom at Old Sun (Blackfoot) School, an Anglican residential school in Gleichen, Alberta, Canada.

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