

WITNESS MAGAZINE

RESISTING

DESPAIR



VOLUME 84

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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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LETTERS

Rewarding conscience with nightmare

I have been a subscriber to *The Witness* for several years now and I must say that I don't think I've ever encountered a magazine that more accurately reflected my progressive/inclusive views on Christianity, spirituality, and social activism, and I thank you all for bringing that to me on a monthly basis.

I would like to comment on the recent U.S. presidential election because it ties in with the theme of the November 2000 issue ('Resisting Politics as Usual'). During the course of the campaign, Green party candidate Ralph Nader frequently sounded off on the assertion that there was no real difference between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush. I couldn't disagree more. Although I concede that the Democrats and Republicans are, in fact, on the same page regarding a number of issues such as the death penalty, military spending, and world trade, I would say that there are vast differences on many other critical issues, such as environmental protection, support of organized labor and public schools, tax policy, and civil rights, issues that the Vice President clearly held views on that better reflected the public interest.

I read somewhere that Nader remarked that a victory by George W. Bush would be a "cold shower" for the Democrats. I am annoyed, however, that that "cold shower" will probably unleash a concerted effort on the part of the Republican majority to deconstruct the gains made in the area of environmental protection, including the Clinton administration's initiative to preserve the remaining 60 million acres of unspoiled wilderness in our National Forests. I am also saddened by the prospect of having a Supreme Court that, with two or three additional Bush appointees, will be much more likely to favor the interests of the wealthy over the powerless. It also upsets me that the fruits of fiscal discipline

could be outrageously squandered on a Bush tax cut proposal for people who don't need a tax cut, rather than being spent on debt reduction, education initiatives, and on a first step toward universal health care.

I have no problem at all with the Green Party. I am a member of The Sierra Club who has supported environmental action groups, both nationally and locally. I have two boys, ages three and one, and I can tell you that having a President who thinks that NOTHING should be done about global warming is downright frightening. The problem, it seems to me, is that we are operating under such a poorly designed electoral system that rewards people who vote their conscience with their worst nightmare. I think that the instant runoff voting method that is currently being used in a few countries, and is under consideration by several states for future use is a good first step, along with a long overdue examination of the relevancy of the electoral college.

Ralph Nader should have understood what the consequences of his role as "spoiler" were going to be. For those of us who care deeply about social justice issues and the environment, it's going to be a cold winter.

Paul Winters
Framingham, MA

Thanks for the photos!

Ed. note: In the final moments of production of our January/February 2001 issue we neglected to include a credit for the historic photos that accompanied our piece on "Lawsuits and the loss of a culture," which dealt with the Anglican Church of Canada and the lawsuits it faces over its treatment of native children in church-run residential schools. Those photos, from the Anglican Church of Canada Archives, were provided to us by Steve Brickenden of the *Anglican Journal*. We appreciate his help.

Blessed by wagging tails

by Julie A. Wortman

I've promised myself that when I finish writing this editorial note (if the sun is still up) I will take our dogs for a walk at the beach. Deadlines prevented me from this daily ritual this morning, so I'm hoping to make up for lost time. My sense of balance needs restoring. My hope for the world needs encouraging. My place in the universe needs clarifying.

Big talk, I know. We are only speaking here about a simple outing along the water's restless edge with three black Labrador-ish mongrels. An outing that is, after all, pretty predictable. Buster will likely ceaselessly patrol for errant ducks, terns and loons. Hoping to seduce Buster into a game, Martin will prance along in proud and sassy possession of a driftwood stick. The aged Bedford, rocking back and forth on arthritic legs like a drunken sailor, will doubtless absorb him-

self in mysteries only a canine nose can detect, stolidly oblivious (and, frankly, deaf) to any special requests I might make of him.

Day in and day out we make this pilgrimage. The tides shift. Rain replaces sunshine, replaces fog, replaces snow. One day the beach is rocky, the next full of seaweed, the next spotlessly devoid of debris. Sand dollars abound and then are scarce. Islands hover above the horizon and then are shrouded from view by thick fog.

Each and every day the dogs greet the prospect of their morning walk with unlimited enthusiasm, while I'm frequently ambivalent — as this morning, feeling the tug of work. And where their mood is always joyous, mine often isn't. I brood over fields rumored to have been sold for more trophy summer homes. Over profit-driven, seemingly unstoppable forces hell-bent on sacri-

ficing caribou and a people's way of life for a few months of oiled energy. Over the bleak future of local teenagers running amuck for the lack of a sober parent's genuine companionship and care. Over my own abundant shortcomings, both personal and political.

Despair begins to circle my head like a hungry gull.

The blessing is that, over and over, I find rescue from such dispiriting meditations in the form of wagging tails that insist on a stick flung into the waves, *now!* That remark on the goodness, yet once more, of *this day!* That insist that life is *life!*

The wagging returns me to my senses. I find I have been sleepwalking. My vision slowly recalibrates to take in the nuance of maroon twigs against russet grasses, the play of light on the waves, deer tracks in the snow. Step by step, I recover myself. Regain my footing in this very particular place, at this singular moment of the globe's turning. Open my pores to the exuberance of creatures who are completely devoted to this unique moment, whatever the next may bring. Inhale salt air. Exhale despair. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale.

Eventually we arrive back at the car out of breath, thinking of breakfast. Where the trip coming was full of excitement, the return journey is mellow with satisfaction. A painful mental landscape lies discarded on the sand for the tide to wash away. Greed, exploitation, cruelty and personal failings have not been miraculously banished from the world. But I'm again awake to creation's beauty, to the small excellences — to life.

Julie A. Wortman, is editor and publisher of *The Witness*.



Anna Cox

Finally,
beloved,
whatever is true,
whatever is honorable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence and if there
is anything worthy of praise, think about
these things.

Keep on doing the things that you have
learned and received and heard and seen in me,

and the God of peace will be with you.

— *Philippians 4:8 (NRSV)*

DOING THE WORK

An interview with Joanna Macy

by Marianne Arbogast



JOANNA MACY is an activist and a scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory and deep ecology who has developed and conducted workshops around the globe to help people do “despair and empowerment work” or, as it is now called, “the work that reconnects.” In the face of the crises facing our world, “we are tempted to shut down, narrowing our sights to our own and our family’s short-term survival,” Macy writes in *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (New Society Publishers, 1998). Yet, she insists that “a silent revolution” is occurring in our midst, radically altering our perceptions and actions and bringing about a “Great Turning” from an industrial-growth society to a life-sustaining society. Macy is the author of eight books, including *Widening Circles: a Memoir*, a spiritual autobiography published last year by New Society Publishers.

Marianne Arbogast: The issue of *The Witness* that we just finished working on [Jan./Feb. 2001] focuses on indigenous peoples in the Western hemisphere, and much of what’s in it is very bleak. There’s an account of the massacre in Acteal in Chiapas, and a story about the threat to the Gwich’in people and the caribou herd in the Arctic because of proposed oil drilling, and exploitation of people and the land in Central America. When I was talking yesterday with Julie Wortman, we both acknowledged the heaviness we were feeling working

on this. When we’re confronted with such tremendous evil, how can we keep from being overwhelmed, or overwhelming others, with the sheer immensity of it?

Joanna Macy: That question has motivated much of my life’s work. And I have been helped immeasurably by seeing that the pain that we feel for the world is the other face of love. We would not feel the sorrow or the outrage if we were not profoundly connected with our world. So we can understand those feelings as evidence of our mutual belonging.

It is important not to reduce those feelings to a private craziness or a personal pathology. They are natural and wholesome responses, and they are very widespread. My book with Molly Brown, *Coming Back to Life*, has a whole chapter on honoring our pain for the world. I share exercises we do that help people explore and express what they’re feeling, and reframe it in the context of our connectedness. Our capacity to “suffer-with” is the literal meaning of compassion. When we don’t resist or pathologize these feelings, they help us see more clearly and become more aware of the larger context.

In that larger, longer-term context an epochal shift is occurring — from the Industrial Growth Society, which is self-destructive, to a Life-Sustaining Civilization. This “Great Turning” takes a while, because the present economic system is so entrenched. But the shift must happen and it is happening. Look at what’s going on at the grassroots: not only direct action and resistance, but also the creation of new structures and new forms — and along with all that there’s a shift in consciousness, a spiritual revolution. Our sense of self-interest is rapidly expanding to include the planet; we are awakening to our embeddedness in the living body of Earth. So there’s much to take hope in on the larger, long-term scale, and we can feel privileged to be alive now to take part in it.

Still, on a daily basis, we are seeing the tremendous costs in terms of oppression and destruction and wars and preparations for war. So we need to find ways to respect and not be stopped by the despair, which has a lot to teach us and which is inevitable, because we’re intrinsic parts of a world where a lot is being lost.

M.A.: It’s interesting to me that you see that as a widespread

THAT RECONNECTS

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experience, because I've been struck recently by how many people I know — and not people who are ecological activists — who have experienced some kind of intense grief, coming from some non-conceptual level, for the natural world. I have a friend who found herself weeping for months over her sense that trees were dying — she kept saying she thought people would think she was crazy. Another friend talked about feeling smothered when she saw housing or commercial developments paving over the earth. Do you think those experiences are common?

J.M.: Absolutely. The life that is in us, the life that is breathing through us and beating in our hearts, is very ancient. It didn't begin with our conception, or even with our species, which has come on the scene pretty recently. Wild nature and life's passion for itself is bred into us, in our bones, so when we see how life is being smothered and poisoned, grief is a natural response. And we can turn it into a greater sense of our connectedness and the power that comes from our connectedness.

M.A.: I think we can sometimes feel that the problems facing the earth and human beings are so complex, and that we don't have the right kind of education — or even the right kind of mind — to comprehend them, or to be able to do anything useful.

J.M.: It's very good, then, to look at the countless examples right now of citizens stepping beyond their own personal life to work together, to walk in fresh paths, and to create cohousing, or new ways of holding the land, or new ways of growing food, or new kinds of schools and new forms of currency. These manifestations can look marginal if you only consult the corporate-controlled media, where they're hardly reflected in the headlines and on the evening news. But when you train your eyes to look for it, you see on every hand people quietly taking action on behalf of other humans, other species, the soil, the forests, in a way that, when I was a young woman, wasn't even dreamt of. Oh, there were always the peace and justice activists, but this upwelling of identification with the larger web of life is actually quite recent and happening very fast. And when you direct your attention to pertinent sources of information both in print, like *Yes!* magazine, or on the web, like *Rachel's Weekly*, you can see the tremendous vitality, and feel proud to be alive at a time when our species is showing so much learning and ingenuity. That's important for me because I get angry and cynical when I look at the corporate-controlled media.

The spiritual practices of our traditions are enormously helpful to us in dealing with despair. From my root tradition in Christianity, there is the whole tradition of Passion Week and Good Friday, and in the Jewish tradition, the High Holy Days around atonement, the Kaddish and Yom Kippur. Being able to grieve together is profoundly bonding and sane-making. When we borrow from these traditions in our workshops, people find a container to speak the sadness and the dread they feel. Then a tremendous upwelling of energy, even hilarity, occurs because the life-force rushes in so fast when we stop denying our pain for the world.

M.A.: Last year, you had an article in *Timeline* in which you said that “not being certain of the success of our work can liberate us from

having to be braced all the time against bad news, and feeling we have to work up a sense of hope.” Could you say more about that?

J.M.: The Great Turning, from an Industrial Growth Society to a Life-Sustaining Society, is happening, we know that; but what we don't know is whether we'll pull it off in time to save life on earth. And that very uncertainty can bring out the best in us, the true courage and creativity. We mustn't get caught in the polarity of optimism and pessimism. Those are passing feelings. Don't limit yourself with a label. Even if you brim with hope that we'll pull through, there are still huge losses to grieve, whole cultures and species disappearing.

So let's make friends with the sadness, see it as the dark sister, that part of you that knows we're losing much that can never be recalled. That keeps us honest. It also helps us be less attached to the visible results of our own efforts. Then we can give ourselves more freely, just glad to have a chance to participate in the Great Turning.

It's important to acknowledge that the problems we're dealing with have roots in the past, before our birth, and also that most of those for whom we work are not born yet. We need to see our lives and actions within larger expanses of time. That is why I offer “Deep Time” workshops where we experience our bonds with the ancestors and our allegiance to the future generations. That brings a sense of calm determination, and helps us rise above our habitual, carping self-judgments for not doing enough or not doing it better. Then we can rejoice in the sheer opportunity to act.

M.A.: Part of the impetus for this issue of *The Witness* was Scott Russell Sanders, an activist who wrote of an experience with his teenage son, who got very angry with him one day and said, you're not giving me any hope. How can we be honest with our children about how the world is and at the same time offer them real grounds for hope?

J.M.: This is a time of tremendous opportunity when people are doing beautiful things, and you can see real heroes; each young person can be one of them. It's very helpful to give examples. When I talk about the Great Turning, I point to the many ways youth are involved.

In my most recent 12-day training, many participants got involved in the support of a forest action nearby, where a steep slope of redwoods was being illegally clearcut. Young people with Earth First! were tree-sitting on platforms a hundred feet in the air, and they were managing to save 80 trees by interlinking them with their high rope bridges. My trainees went into service to these young people — and a fresh clarity came into all our work together. Seems we learn best when we're acting on behalf of Earth.

Young people are active in so many ways — working in after-school programs in the inner city, and creating organic gardens in schoolyards and vacant lots. Examples abound, when you look.

M.A.: So hope can come in finding a way to respond or being part of that kind of action?

J.M.: That's absolutely right. I don't know how else to maintain high spirits. When you get involved in a team action, even with all

the hard work and risk, it's fun. There's so much at stake, and the people around you are so great, that you feel glad to be alive.

M.A.: Probably many of us have had those kinds of experiences — but we've also had negative experiences connected with activism. I wanted to ask you what you would see as healthy activism, because sometimes activists can seem to be hitting each other over the head, or hitting others over the head, because people aren't doing enough, or they're not getting involved with a certain issue or in a certain way.

J.M.: That kind of activism is outdated and counterproductive. Watch out for self-righteousness. Watch out for the trap of thinking you know, or need to know, the only right answer. Be truthful to your vision, but don't feel you need to develop a strategic plan for the human race. It doesn't work that way. We only know what works as we act; each step reveals what the next step should be. So we've got to watch out for dogmatism, and thinking that the struggle is between good guys and bad guys. We're all in this together. We're going to pull through this dark passage together or not at all. So don't fall prey to self-importance, and imagining that it all depends on you personally. The responsibility we must own is a collective one, and we shoulder it together to correct and heal the harm that is done in our name.

Once you get involved, you see that everybody can participate but nobody can take the full credit. And that means that nobody can take the full blame, either.

M.A.: Today it seems that corporations are identified as the "bad guys" — and often rightfully so. Yet all of us know good people who work for these companies, and may even be doing very good things in their particular jobs. How do you deal with these kinds of ambiguities?

J.M.: We must remember that the real "enemy" is the institutionalized forms of greed, hatred, and ignorance — not the flesh-and-blood people who are in bondage to those structures. As they awaken to their interconnectedness with all life, these very people become our allies, helping to change the system from the inside.

M.A.: There is also sometimes a tendency to try to establish a sort of hierarchy of activism — thinking a certain cause is *the* cause and everybody should be working on it.

J.M.: You're right, that does happen, but it's not useful. It's wrongheaded to imagine that my cause is more important than your cause. The teachings of interconnectedness help us to see that whatever issue we're working on — whether it's saving the whales or feeding the homeless in a soup kitchen — has the same root cause: the human mistake of seeking to exploit and dominate. So I don't think the particular issue or campaign is as important as getting involved; then you begin to see how interwoven all these issues are. Just pick one thing. It doesn't matter if you think it's the most important or not. Pick whatever you feel drawn to. Join in with others — and roll up your sleeves. ●

Coming Back to Life, Joanna Macy's book with Molly Young Brown, and her memoir, Widening Circles, can be ordered from New Society Publishers (800-567-6772 and www.newsociety.com). For information on her workshops and trainings contact dmosel@igc.org or fax 510-649-9605. Her web site (www.joannamacy.net) will soon be online.

Open Sentences

Purpose

This exercise provides a swift and easy way for people to voice their inner responses to the condition of our world. Its structure helps people both to listen with total receptivity and to express thoughts and feelings that are usually censored for fear of comment or adverse reaction. The sequence of the sentences generally moves from thoughts and views to feelings.

Description

People sit in pairs, face-to-face and close enough to attend to each other fully. They refrain from speaking until the exercise begins. When the guide speaks each unfinished sentence, Partner A repeats it, completes it in his own words, addressing Partner B, and keeps on talking spontaneously for the time allotted. The partners then switch roles. Depending on the material, they switch after each open sentence or, more usually, at the end of the series. The listening partner — this is to be emphasized — keeps silent, saying absolutely nothing and hearkening as attentively and supportively as possible.

If the partners switch roles once, after a series of sentences, invite A to convey without speaking his appreciation to B for B's supportive listening, and invite B to express — again nonverbally — her respect for A's concerns and his courage in sharing them.

For the completion of each open sentence allow a minute or two — or longer, if the momentum is strong. Give a brief warning each time before it is time to move on, saying, "Take a minute to finish up," or "Thank you." A clap or small bell can then bring people to silence, where they rest a few seconds before the next open sentence.

Here is a sample series of open sentences that we have used a great deal. Feel free to make up your own to address the particular interests of the group, remembering to keep them as unbiased and nonleading as possible.

- 1 I think the condition of our society is becoming ...
- 2 I think the condition of our environment is becoming ...
- 3 What concerns me most about the world today is ...
- 4 When I think of the world we will leave our children, it looks like ...
- 5 Feelings about all this, that I carry around with me, are ...
- 6 Ways I avoid these feelings are ...
- 7 Ways I use feelings are ...

Reprinted with permission from Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World, by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, New Society Publishers, 1998.

ENTERING

A chaotic strange attractor, a shape that reveals the order inherent in chaos, from the work of Mario Markus and Benno Hess, Max Planck-Institut, Dortmund, Germany.

LIFE'S RHYTHMS

Drumming a way into sacred time

by Ana Hernandez

God set the sun to rise and set every day, and put the earth into orbit. The moon makes it around the earth every 28 days or so, the locusts come back every seven years, Advent comes before Christmas, Lent before Easter, Sunday before Monday, and work comes before play — a really bad idea. We eat, sleep, and brush our teeth, our hearts seem to pump without any prompting, and many other events and phenomena seem to repeat themselves in the same order and at the same intervals through time. We start out riding tricycles, graduate to bicycles, and, if we're lucky enough to reach enlightenment, we get to view it all as one big interconnected unicycle. Through it all, we are rhythm.

The first thing we recognize on this earth is the vibration of our mother's blood through her veins and arteries, and later on, the sound of our mother's heartbeat and breathing while we are in the womb. The ear being the first sense organ to develop, somewhere between the fifth and sixth month of gestation, we begin to actually hear these internal rhythms. By 28 to 30 weeks, we can also respond to both the internal and external rhythms (by kicking or changing our heart rate). After we are born, there aren't many opportunities for such a nice rhythmic massage.

Rhythm is the most powerful organizational tool we've got. Since the ancients, rhythm has been used to mark communal events. The earliest drummers were women, using frame drums for liturgy. Look what rhythm did for King David, and the Benedictines; we're still hooked on the psalms. Armies still use drums to boost morale and energize tired troops (maybe if more people drummed, we wouldn't need wars), shamans use rattles like white noise, to scatter thought, and there's nothing better than Motown or the Poulenc "Gloria" to clean by; believe me, a clean house is a successful revolution. Rhythm has been used to celebrate, to warn of a storm coming, to ensure a good harvest and to accompany farm work. Dancers clap, stomp on the floor, make mouth noises, wear ankle bells or use their bodies as percussion instruments.

So what is it about rhythm that energizes us? What is the hypnotic

effect that can happen with any kind of music, from the beginning of "She Loves You," by the Beatles, to a Bach fugue, to the latest sounds coming from the DJ's booth above the dance floor? The scientists say that it is the nature of rhythm to turn on the switches in the limbic system (or what used to be called the "visceral" or "reptilian brain"). The adrenaline starts to surge (bringing up our emotions and feelings), the information is then processed by the neo-cortex, and we are moved in myriad ways. Or something like that. I can never pay attention long enough to figure it all out; I get distracted somewhere around "She Loves You, yeah, yeah, yeah, YEAH-HH..." In her book, *When the Drummers Were Women*, Layne Redmond says: "Scientific studies have shown that our moods, emotions, thoughts and bodily processes are rhythms of chemical energy. The Puerto Ricans call this fundamental rhythm that marks how we walk, talk, and interact *tumbao*. It is an expression of the totality of our personality." The verb *tumbar* means to knock down, to knock over, and is used figuratively in the sense of mixing somebody up, taking the senses away from you, or messing with your whole sense of being.

Rhythm can also calm and soothe us. It's no accident that one of the basic forms of meditation consists of counting the breath. If you're trying to get the kids to sleep, lullabies work like a charm by helping to slow the breath, relaxing them, and sending them to never-never land. Think of the tune "Silent Night," and breathe with it. We are all made of the same stuff. We all breathe the same air, the same air that people have been breathing since the dawn of time. I like to think that all of my favorite people have breathed the same air throughout history. Make a date for you and your breath, and put it in your book. Take a moment, find a quiet place to breathe, and think of all of the people whose air you are sharing.

Rhythm is more like dancing than knowing. We don't have to control or even be aware of what's going on for it to have a profound effect on us. It's our body that hears where to go next. When my uncle was in the hospital a few years ago for an angioplasty, the

For More On Drumming

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web sites: www.drums.org

nurses were worried that his oxygen levels weren't improving a few days after the surgery. They were watching his monitors, and as they watched, his oxygen level rose to normal. A nurse asked, "What are you doing?" He said, "I was just lying here singing John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt in my head." She said, "Well, keep singing it, because your levels are great." The body hears where to go next.

I first began drumming around 1990. I had a Djembe from Ghana, in West Africa, and had been told that it was used to invoke the divine spirit and its healing power. Then, while on vacation, I was in a beautiful park in Ithaca, N.Y., with some friends, picnicking on the lake. A man walked by and said "Drums for Sale." I couldn't believe what he had in his arms: four rectangular boxes with slits of various lengths and widths cut into the top that looked like tongues. I called him over and asked him to show me these "drums" he had made, which he called "slit drums." The sound took my breath away. I needed a slit drum. He volunteered that he had "more in the van," so I went for a peek, and found one that I really liked. I proceeded to drive my friends crazy all the livelong day, banging away on that drum.

I started to do some research on slit drums. According to Adrienne Kaeppler (in Mickey Hart's *Planet Drum*), "Slit drums ... are believed to represent ancestral voices which encourage the living to dance into a state of communal ecstasy in order to banish personal preoccupations and bring those dancing into communion with collective forces passed on from the dead to the living and those still to come."

Whoa! One world at a time, please! But I do need to banish personal preoccupations, who doesn't? Wondering about those collective forces, I looked up "spirit": *geist*, *ruach*, *geest*, *spirare*, *esprit*. Why had I never noticed that they all either mean ghost or breath as well as spirit? What else was I missing?

I decided to check out the effects of the drum on myself first. I started with the heart-beat rhythm, because it is the thing we all share. I found I could drum myself right into a trance if I kept the beat at about twice my heart rate. Years later I learned from Don Campbell (author of *The Mozart Effect* and expert on music and healing) that if you drum a simple eighth-note rhythm at 120–140 beats per minute for more than three minutes, it balances the brainwaves, and you start going into a trance. (Kids and people with blood pressure problems, do not try this at home! Talk to your doctor first. There are very real physical consequences when you mess around with your natural rhythms.)

The heartbeat is still the first rhythm I teach in drumming workshops. Along with our breathing, it is the most fundamental aspect of our lives, and just one of many basic things we do not pay attention to. It's also simple to learn, and anyone can do it. Close your eyes, place your hand on your heart or wrist, and feel your heartbeat. If you have trouble, don't worry, you're not dead yet. Imagine the rhythm of your heart. Now, begin to vocalize the rhythm with your voice. When you feel comfortable sounding out your heartbeat, try playing it on your drum, using your hands or a mallet. Try it for five minutes, and see if you don't feel both relaxed and energized.

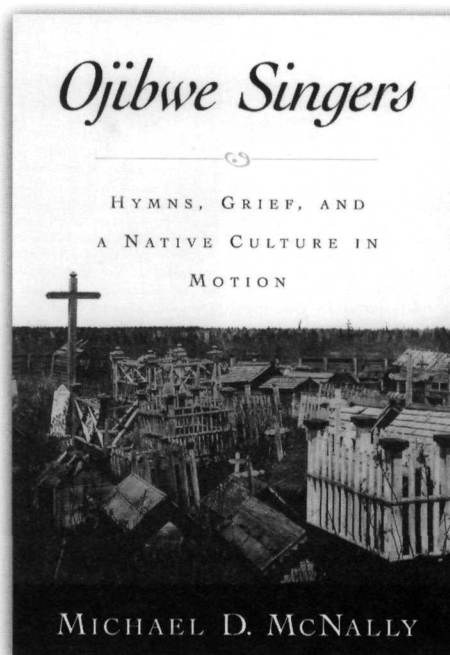
The point of using the heartbeat is so that you can begin to get acquainted with your internal rhythms, and also to help you feel more relaxed. Try it with a partner, facing each other. It is a good exercise to enhance listening skills, concentration and intimacy. With your eyes open this time, each begin to play your own heartbeat rhythm. You will soon find that you are in synch. This synchronization is called entrainment, the force that brings two or more bodies vibrating with similar rhythmic cycles into alignment. Go into a music store, and strike an A tuning fork, and all the A strings on all the guitars along the walls will begin to vibrate in sympathy. Place two pendulum clocks in a room and come back a day later, and they'll be in synch too. Sit in a drum circle and lay out for a second, and your drum will still vibrate. That many things happen without my "help" was a huge lesson.

Drumming has been a positive revolution in my life. Like most of us, I grew up in that either/or, right/wrong worldview. Let's just say I did not flourish there. I see more possibilities on the margins, and luckily, in a drum circle, everyone's on the margin. The people who come to a drum circle are the ones who are supposed to be there, to energize the spirit and explore unity through music. No words are needed. If you are six or 90, broken or whole, happy or depressed, tuned in or out of touch, blind, deaf, lame, too smart for your own good or not too bright, a democrat, republican, anarchist or atheist, you have a place in the circle. You are a part of the community. Rhythm is a universal language, and you are the rhythm. I like the image of a circle, because it speaks to the mystic in me. In a circle, everyone is equidistant from the center. There is always room for anyone to come and go. All the members are equal in the circle, each with a voice that can be heard by everyone else. Everyone takes turns leading the transitions to new rhythms. The kind of music that is made in a circle is based upon that circle's relationship with itself rather than any externally imposed expectations.

Since I've been practicing drumming without a license, I have witnessed drumming cure headaches and relieve the pain for a woman with a brain tumor. I've seen the faces of many lighten and radiate the joy that was secretly lurking. I've seen bodies that were stiff become fluid, and people who are shy come out to play. I've seen angry people find a place to work it out. People have told me of their lowered blood pressure and of their reduced stress and anxiety. I've also seen how giving people a rhythm that they're not ready for looks exactly like test anxiety. There's a lot of shallow breathing and tense faces; heads go down, people get timid, stop listening, and withdraw from interaction.

I used to be affected by the rhythms of everything and everyone around me. It was distracting and depressing. I felt out of "synch." We often say that when we're getting sick. Trying to play to another's rhythm isn't healthy if the cost is ignoring your own. Drumming has enabled me to hear my own rhythms amid the noise and haste, helps me to find and maintain my balance, and helps to keep my blood pressure down. The increased awareness of my breathing has helped me to throw away both cigarettes and asthma medicine. Drumming has also enhanced my ability to listen, increased my level of patience, helped to work through grief and frustration, and given me a much more relaxed and positive outlook on life, because of its unique ability to ground me and bring me into the magic place of sacred time. ●

Ana Hernandez is a musician who also works at the Episcopal Book and Resource Center at the Episcopal Church Center in New York.



OJIBWE SINGERS

Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion
by Michael D. McNally
(Oxford University Press, 2000).

In 1997 *The Witness* gave its William Stringfellow award to the Ojibwe elders of Minnesota, who, struggling

for a response to the soaring number of teen suicides in their own communities, reinstituted hymn sings — services of testimony and song — praying to restore the spiritual strength of the teens and their circle.

Michael McNally, an assistant professor of history at Eastern Michigan University, has written a sophisticated and scholarly monograph that sets precisely that effort in the context of its cultural history. This is a work against the grain of that strand of scholarship which regards such hybrid cultural forms (Ojibwe hymns) as simply eroding traditional values and capitulating to Christian culture.

Tracing the history in periods, McNally is able to show how, by remaking the music as their own, hymn-singing functioned as a way of carving out a semi-autonomous space within the constrictions of reservation life. While he does not make the analogy explicit, the process is not dissimilar from the way gospel hymns and spirituals of slave religion in the American south likewise created a free space in the hush-harbors.

In the present time, he recounts the history of how the elders revived the hymn-singing tradition, and, in particular, how it functioned to reawaken collective memory at the wakes of teens who had suffered violent deaths. While, as McNally himself acknowledges, this hymn-singing tradition is by no means unambiguous or without contradiction (somehow engendering both accommodation and resistance), it marks truly another rich "bridging" of spirituality. ●

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

REHABILITATION?

Fighting to free 'the poster boy for punishment'

by Roger Lowenstein

IT IS LATE AUGUST OF 1963 and John F. Kennedy is in the White House. I'm a 19-year-old college student working as an intern on Capitol Hill in the office of a liberal Jersey City congressman, and helping to organize Capitol Hill employees to join the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and shut down the Hill. I've been to Europe twice, but I've never met a convicted criminal. I venerate the working class but don't know any "workers." I'm naïve and idealistic and think the only real political organizing that needs to be done is to push Kennedy to the left. Why won't he fully embrace the Civil Rights movement?

Back in my home state of New Jersey some lowlife thugs are celebrating an armed robbery in Brooklyn by drinking and carousing with various girlfriends in a roadside dive in Lodi. One of the thugs, Frankie Falco, is wanted for murder. Another, Tommy Trantino, sits at the bar drinking himself into oblivion. He's had two dexedrine tablets and 20 double shots of whiskey. A police sergeant and an unarmed probationary policeman respond to a noise complaint at 2:30 in the morning. They enter the bar. The sergeant finds a gun wrapped in a towel on the bar. Trantino jumps him and disarms him, giving his service revolver to Falco. The cops are told to strip. They begin to comply. Trantino hits the sergeant with his gun, then both cops are shot to death. The next day the cops catch up to Frankie Falco in a New York City hotel room and execute him. Trantino turns himself in, is tried and sentenced to death in New Jersey's electric chair. Our lives will soon cross.

By the time I get my law degree and finish my clerkship on the New Jersey Supreme Court Tommy has been in the Death House for five years. Perhaps the best description of Tommy then is provided by Frank Bisignano, another cop-killer awaiting execution:

When he came in, he was very disjointed. He used to fly off on tangents. He was very withdrawn and introverted. It was like he was on drugs and they had kept him drugged during his trial. You're faced with two choices in a place like that. You do something for yourself or become a vegetable. For months, he wouldn't talk to anyone and he had a very bad temper.

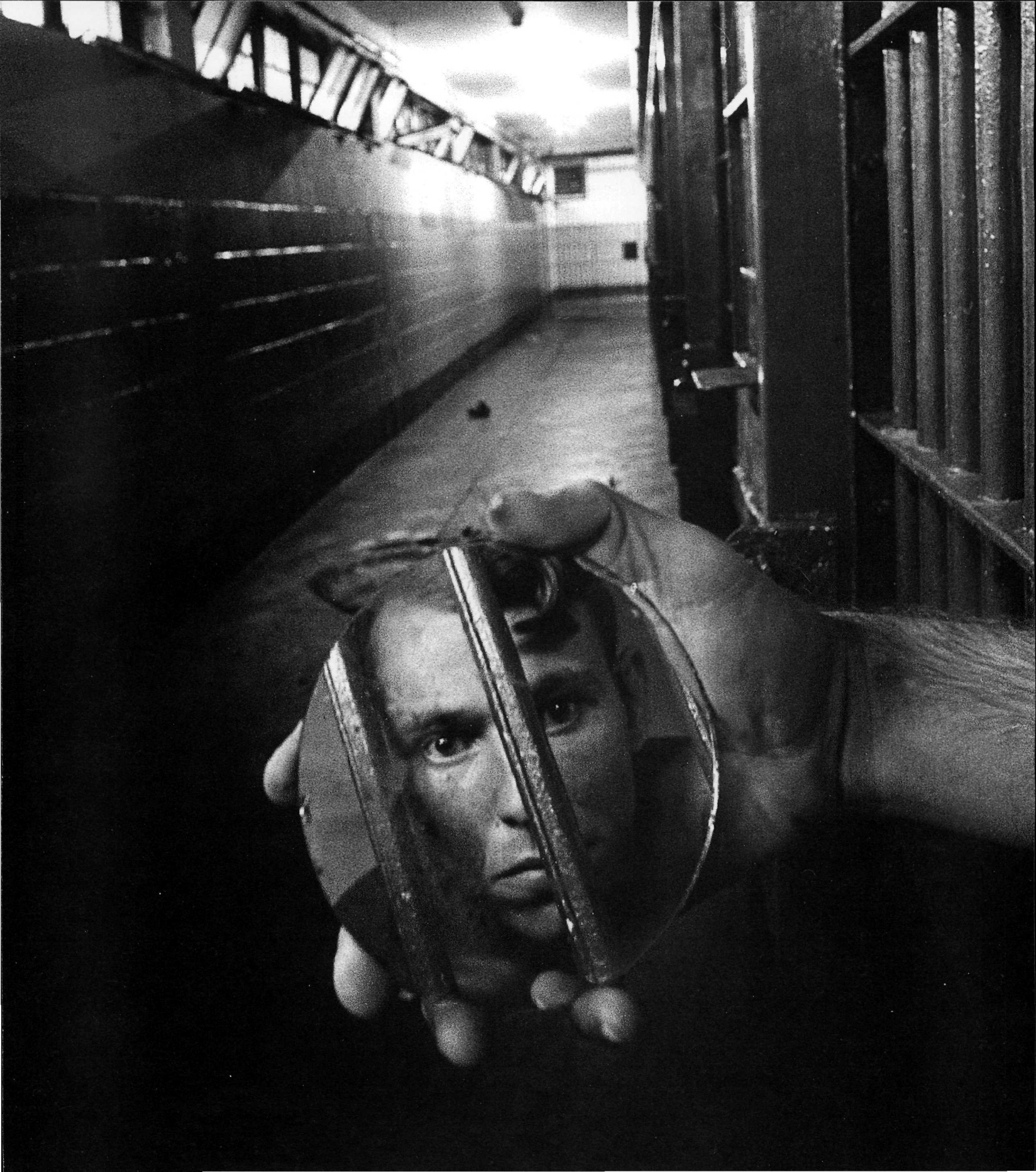
They had a ventilation shaft running up by the cells and you

could open it to get some air. We used it like an intercom system. We'd sit and talk for hours about the deepest feelings we had ... I saw Tommy become a totally different individual. He went from being a temperamental, moody person to a pacifist. He became very involved in topical events and very involved in the peace movement. He just couldn't hurt anybody anymore.

I was 22, and the first book I read was Peyton Place. I was reading things like that until Tommy started teaching me how to spell, how to punctuate, and to develop a vocabulary.

I'll tell you what kind of guy he was. I was broke for 10 years. But Tommy had a little money coming in and every time he would get a money order he would send me up a little bag with cigarettes, paint supplies, and things like that. He bought me my first typewriter. I never had to ask. And he did that type of thing for everyone on Death Row. ...When the guys were glum they all looked to him. It was like the whole institution was on his back, and he stood up to it.

By 1969 I am a fledgling public defender in Newark. When I had first entered a maximum security prison in Concord, Mass., as a first-year law student I couldn't make eye contact with the prisoners. They were an alien species. No more. I like my clients, and like getting them acquitted even better. I consider myself a "radical" and am one of many young protégés of Len Weinglass and Bill Kunstler. I share offices with Len and other members of the Newark "law commune." Len represents Tommy in failed attempts at post-conviction relief. In 1972 the death penalty is held unconstitutional nationwide. Tommy's sentence is commuted to life. He will be eligible for parole in 1977. By then Tommy is at the minimum security Wharton Tract facility training young inmates how to avoid recidivism. On one work release trip into the community he saves the life of a young girl who had fallen into the water and was drowning. Tommy doesn't swim but jumped in after her anyway. In 1978 Little Brown publishes his critically acclaimed book of autobiographical short stories and drawings entitled, *Lock the Lock*. Prison psychologists declare that Tommy has successfully rehabilitated himself and has channeled all his previously negative energy into positive accomplishments



in an effort to make amends.

It is 1982. Parole has finally been granted, then rescinded and new conditions imposed following public outcry, candlelight vigils and a media circus that includes the repetition of mythology about the crime created by the police (they danced over the corpses, urinating on them, performing unspeakable sex acts, etc.). I make my first court appearance for Tommy at the Bergen County Courthouse and have to cross a picket line of uniformed cops chanting, "Kill him, kill him!" The ostensible reason for the hearing is to determine the amount of "restitution" that Tommy must pay as a condition of any future parole, but the real purpose of the hearing is to allow the victims' families to ventilate regarding the horrible impact of the crime. Tommy is being guarded by corrections officers, who have placed snipers on the courthouse roof. I sit next to the most hated inmate in New Jersey, becoming by osmosis the most hated lawyer in New Jersey. In a society that has given up on the concept of rehabilitation my client is the poster boy for punishment.

Thus began, off and on, my now more than 18-year struggle with the New Jersey parole and corrections system on Tommy's behalf. In a system designed to have no more than two parole hearings before release, Tommy has had 11. He is the longest-serving New Jersey inmate. He will be 63 in February, having donated his entire adult life to the prison system. Frank Bisignano and the others in the Death House with Tommy have been paroled 15 years ago. Every time Tommy comes up for parole his record of accomplishments has grown, requiring consistently more fantastic rationales to justify denial. By now, with no bad conduct for the last 37 years to justify any negative conclusions, the Parole Board must resort to new psychological "evaluations" in order to make the case that the "real" Tommy Trantino is lurking beneath the benign affect, just waiting for release so he can recidivate. As in the Soviet Union, the so-called "healing" professions have been inducted into the criminal justice system in order to bury political prisoners. Tommy's case has been before the Supreme Court of New Jersey four times, most recently in September 2000. We wait for an opinion.

In 1990 I moved to Los Angeles to become a television writer. I got rid of my law practice. Other lawyers took my other cases, but no one would take Tommy's case. A hundred lawyers told me, this guy's never getting out. Give it up. But they warned us in law school to beware the lawyer with only one case. I am now that lawyer, and I keep on plugging. It is clear to me and any fair-minded observer that Tommy is being held illegally by New Jersey authorities. In 1995 I filed a state habeas corpus petition. Since April of that year, without any break (or compensation), I have been litigating Tommy's case non-stop in a court system now 3000 miles from home. I have been before the Appellate Division three times and the Supreme Court twice. Last year the Appellate Division finally granted relief and ordered immediate parole. In an exhaustive 62-page opinion the Court held that the Parole Board had no factual basis for denying parole. But after the usual public outcry the Attorney General obtained a stay from the Supreme Court. That Court granted review, and Tommy remains in prison.

By the time this article is published there will be an opinion. Either Tommy will be free or he will have to serve an additional 20 years

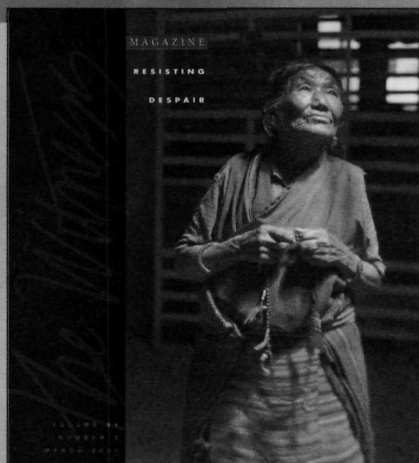
before his next eligibility, his second death penalty. Tommy is the eternal optimist. He believes in the law, and finds my arguments irrefutable. What an irony. A double cop-killer stands up for the rule of law, while those whose job it is to enforce the law – the Attorney General, the members of the Parole Board, the Governor – do everything in their power to distort and subvert the law. When I as the attorney get furious at the injustice, the interminable delays that have robbed Tommy of his adult life, his marriage, his ability to see his mother before she died, it is Tommy who reassures me and calmly predicts ultimate victory.

To me there is no question why I have to fight this case to the end, whenever that may be. There are important issues at stake. The criminal justice system cannot buckle under political pressure as the U.S. Supreme Court recently did in *Bush v. Gore*. More importantly, the issue of rehabilitation is one that defines who we are as a society. Every major religion promotes the concept of redemption. The sinner must be given the opportunity to repent and to do penance through prayer and good works, and we in turn must forgive. Each side of that equation is critical, and each side is imbedded in our criminal justice system. Parole can and should be earned. No matter how heinous the crime, Tommy Trantino today is not the drugged-up thug who committed it. He has changed, and society must accept that if we are to advance as a civilization. We cannot abdicate our criminal justice system to vengeance and the victims' rights movement, or we will all be the lesser for it.

The above paragraph explains intellectually why I fight for Tommy, but ideas are only part of the story. I will fight to the end for Tommy because I am committed to him as a person. Our paths crossed and I agreed to help him. He is being screwed and I happen to know how to fight it. I'm not Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld, looking for innocent clients who can be cleared by DNA tests. Give me a guilty client any day. But then the onus is on me to judge my client – not based so much on guilt or innocence as on whether this person deserves to be in the jam he/she is in, and whether he/she deserves the massive psychic energy needed to reverse his/her fortunes. In Tommy's case the answer is clear. In the course of our journey we have become friends. Maybe it's because we both had strong Jewish mothers with a biting sense of humor, or we're news junkies, or in an odd way we are progressive men who came of age in the 1960s, but we talk on the phone every week as two people on the same trip. The young inmates call Tommy "Pops" and make him feel old and irrelevant in the same way as ageism is pushing me out of the television writing business. Sometimes I'm Don Quixote and he's Sancho Panza; other times it's the reverse. I know how much better I am as a person because of our relationship. I, and our community, will be so much better off with Tommy walking free among us. ●

Roger Lowenstein lives in Los Angeles. On January 18, 2001, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that Thomas Trantino must be transferred to a halfway house within 30 days, then after a 12-month successful adjustment, paroled to the street. The "facts" offered by the parole board to justify denial of parole were described as "makeweight." New Jersey's longest serving inmate (37 years) is finally free.

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SUSTAINED BY LOVE

A call for spiritual practice that restores community

by bell hooks

OUR NATIONAL SPIRITUAL HUNGER springs from a keen awareness of the emotional lack in our lives. It is a response to lovelessness. Going to church or temple has not satisfied this hunger, surfacing from deep within our souls. Organized religion has failed to satisfy spiritual hunger because it has accommodated secular demands, interpreting spiritual life in ways that uphold the values of a production-centered commodity culture. This is as true of the traditional Christian church as it is of New Age spirituality. It is no accident that so many famous New Age spiritual teachers link their teachings to a metaphysics of daily life that extols the virtues of wealth, privilege and power. For example, consider New Age logic, which suggests that the poor have chosen to be poor, have chosen their suffering. Such thinking removes from all of us who are privileged the burden of accountability. Rather than calling us to embrace love and greater community, it actually requires an investment in the logic of alienation and estrangement.

The basic interdependency of life is ignored so that separateness and individual gain can be deified. Religious fundamentalism is often represented as authentic spiritual practice and given a level of mass media exposure that countercultural religious thought and practice never receive. Usually, fundamentalists, be they Christian, Muslim, or any faith, shape and interpret religious thought to make it conform to and legitimize a conservative status quo. Fundamentalist thinkers use religion to justify supporting imperialism, militarism, sexism, racism, homophobia. They deny the unifying message of love that is at the heart of every major religious tradition.

No wonder then that so many people who claim to believe in religious teachings do not allow their habits of being to reflect these beliefs. For example, the Christian church remains one of the most racially segregated institutions in our society. In Martin Luther King, Jr.'s letter to American Christians, in which he assumes the persona of the biblical apostle Paul, he admonishes believers for supporting segregation: "Americans, I must urge you to be rid of every aspect of segregation. Segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we have in Christ. It substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for the 'I-thou' relationship, and relegates persons to the status of things. It scars the

soul and degrades the personality. ... It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible." This is only one example of the way in which organized religious worship corrupts and violates religious principles about how we should live in the world and how we should act toward one another. Imagine how different our lives would be if all the individuals who claim to be Christians, or who claim to be religious, were setting an example for everyone by being loving.

Countercultural spiritual awakening

Blatant misuses of spirituality and religious faith could lead us to despair about spiritual life if we were not simultaneously witnessing a genuine concern for spiritual awakening expressed counterculturally. Whether it is the American Buddhists working in solidarity to free Tibet or the many Christian-based organizations that provide support in the way of food and shelter for the needy globally, these embodiments of loving practice renew our hope and restore the soul. All around the world liberation theology offers the exploited and oppressed a vision of spiritual freedom that is linked to struggles to end domination.

A little more than 10 years after Fromm first published *The Art of Loving*, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s collection of sermons *Strength to Love* was published. The major focus of these talks was the celebration of love as a spiritual force that unites and binds all life. Like Fromm's earlier work, these essays championed spiritual life, critiquing capitalism, materialism, and the violence used to enforce exploitation and dehumanization. In a 1967 lecture opposing war King declared: "When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: 'Let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.'" Throughout his life King was a prophet of love. In the late seventies, when it was no longer cool to talk about spirituality, I found myself

turning again and again to his work and to the work of Thomas Merton. As religious seekers and thinkers, both men focused attention on the practice of love as a means of spiritual fulfillment.

Extolling the transformative power of love in his essay "Love and Need," Merton writes: "Love is, in fact an intensification of life, a completeness, a fullness, a wholeness of life. ... Life curves upward to a peak of intensity, a high point of value and meaning, at which all its latent creative possibility go into action and the person transcends himself or herself in encounter, response and communion with another. It is for this that we came into the world — this communion and self-transcendence. We do not become fully human until we give ourselves to each other in love." The teachings about love offered by Fromm, King and Merton differ from much of today's writing. There is always an emphasis in their work on love as an active force that should lead us into greater communion with the world. In their work, loving practice is not aimed at simply giving an individual greater life satisfaction; it is extolled as the primary way we end domination and oppression. This important politicization of love is often absent from today's writing.

Choosing a commodified spiritual rhetoric ...

Much as I enjoy popular New Age commentary on love, I am often struck by the dangerous narcissism fostered by spiritual rhetoric that pays so much attention to individual self-improvement and so little to the practice of love within the context of community. Packaged as a commodity, spirituality becomes no different from an exercise program. While it may leave the consumer feeling better about his or her life, its power to enhance our communion with ourselves and others in a sustained way is inhibited. Commenting on the value of an engaged life in *The Active Life: Wisdom for Work, Creativity, and Caring*, Parker Palmer writes: "To be fully alive is to act. ... I understand action to be any way that we can co-create reality with other beings and the Spirit. ... Action, like a sacrament, is the visible form of an invisible spirit, an outward manifestation of an inward power. But as we act, we not only express what is in us and help give shape to the world; we also receive what is outside us, and reshape our inner selves." A commitment to a spiritual life requires us to do more than read a good book or go on a restful retreat. It requires conscious practice, a willingness to unite the way we think with the way we act.

... or a conscious spiritual practice?

Spiritual life is first and foremost about commitment to a way of thinking and behaving that honors principles of inter-being and interconnectedness. When I speak of the spiritual, I refer to the recognition within everyone that there is a place of mystery in our lives where forces that are beyond human desire or will alter circumstances and/or guide and direct us. I call these forces "divine spirit." When we choose to lead a spirit-filled life, we recognize and celebrate the presence of transcendent spirits. Some people call this presence soul, God, the Beloved, higher consciousness, or higher power. Still others say that this force is what it is because it cannot be named. To them it is simply the spirit moving in us and through us.

A commitment to spiritual life necessarily means we embrace the eternal principle that love is all, everything, our true destiny. Despite overwhelming pressure to conform to the culture of lovelessness, we still seek to know love. That seeking is itself a manifestation of divine spirit. Life-threatening nihilism abounds in contemporary culture, crossing the boundaries of race, class, gender, and nationality. At some point it affects all our lives. Everyone I know is at times brought low by feelings of depression and despair about the state of the world. Whether it is the ongoing worldwide presence of violence expressed by the persistence of man-made war, hunger and starvation, the day-to-day reality of violence, the presence of life-threatening diseases that cause the unexpected deaths of friends, comrades and loved ones, there is much that brings everyone to the brink of despair. Knowing love or the hope of knowing love is the anchor that keeps us from falling into that sea of despair. In *A Path with Heart*, Jack Kornfield shares: "The longing for love and the movement of love is underneath all of our activities."

Spirituality and spiritual life give us the strength to love. It is rare for individuals to choose a life in the spirit, one that honors the sacred dimensions of everyday life, when they have had no contact with traditional religious thought or practice. Spiritual teachers are important guides who provide a catalyst for our spiritual awakening. Another source of spiritual growth is communion and fellowship with like-minded souls. Spiritual seekers let their light shine so that others may see not only to give service by example but also to constantly remind themselves that spirituality is most gloriously embodied in our actions — our habits of being. Insightfully Jack Kornfield explains: "All other spiritual teachings are in vain if we cannot love. Even the most exalted states and the most exceptional spiritual accomplishments are unimportant if we cannot be happy in the most basic and ordinary ways, if, with our hearts, we cannot touch one another and the life we have been given. What matters is how we live."

Lessons learned in church

For many of us, church was the place where we first heard a counternarrative of love, one that differed from the confused messages about love learned in dysfunctional families. The mystical dimensions of Christian faith (the belief that we are all one, that love is all) presented to me as a child in the church were the space of redemption. At church I learned not only to understand that God is love, I learned also that children were special in the heart and mind of divine spirit. Dreaming of becoming a writer, valuing the life of the mind above all things, it was especially awesome to learn by heart passages from First Corinthians, "the love chapter." From childhood on I have often reflected on the passage that proclaims: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." Throughout my graduate school years, as I worked hard to finish my doctorate,

striving to maintain a commitment to spiritual life in a world that did not value the spiritual, I returned to these lessons about the primacy of love. The wisdom they convey kept me from hardening my heart. Remaining open to love was crucial to my academic survival. When the environment you live in and know most intimately does not place value on loving, a spiritual life provides a place of solace and renewal.

Significantly, the gaining of knowledge about spirituality is not the same as a commitment to a spiritual life. Jack Kornfield testifies: "In undertaking a spiritual life, what matters is simple: We must make certain our path is connected with our heart. In beginning a genuine spiritual journey, we have to stay much closer to home, to focus directly on what is right here in front of us, to make sure that our path is connected with our deepest love." When we begin to experience the sacred in our everyday lives we bring to mundane tasks a quality of concentration and engagement that lifts the spirit. We recognize divine spirit everywhere. This is especially true when we face difficulties. So many people turn to spiritual thinking only when they experience difficulties, hoping that the sorrow or pain will just miraculously disappear. Usually, they find that the place of suffering — the place where we are broken in spirit, when accepted and embraced, is also a place of peace and possibility. Our sufferings do not magically end; instead we are able to wisely alchemically recycle them. They become the abundant waste that we use to make new growth possible. That is why biblical scripture admonishes us to "count it all joy" — when we meet various trials. Learning to embrace our suffering is one of the gifts offered by spiritual life and practice.

Finding divine forces in the natural world ... or at temple

Spiritual practice does not need to be connected to organized religion in order to be meaningful. Some individuals find their sacred connection to life communing with the natural world and engaging in practices that honor life-sustaining ecosystems. We can meditate, pray, go to temple, church, mosque, or create a quiet sanctuary where we live to commune with holy spirits. To some folks, daily service to others is affirmative spiritual practice, one that expresses their love for others. When we make a commitment to staying in touch with divine forces that inform our inner and outer world, we are choosing to lead a life in the spirit.

I study spiritual teachings as a guide for reflection and action. Countercultural spiritual awakening is visible in books and magazines and in small circles where individuals come to celebrate and commune with the divine. Fellowship with other seekers after truth offers essential inspiration. Since the earliest roots of my spiritual practice were in the Christian tradition, I still find the traditional church to be a place for worship and fellowship, and I also participate in a Buddhist practice. I meditate and pray. Everyone has to choose the spiritual practice that best enhances their life. This is why progressive seekers after truth urge us all to be tolerant — to remember that though our paths are many, we are made one community in love.

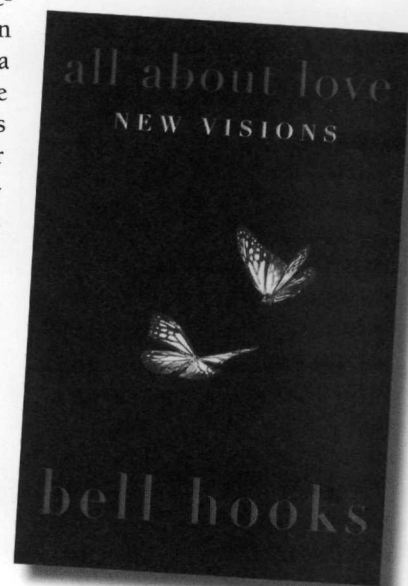
Breaking taboos

The spiritual awakening that is slowly taking place counterculturally will become more of a daily norm as we all willingly break mainstream cultural taboos that silence or erase our passion for spiritual practice. For a long time many of my friends and work peers had no idea I was devoted to a spiritual practice. Among progressive thinkers and scholars it was much more hip, cool and acceptable to express atheistic sentiments than to declare passionate devotion to divine spirit. I also did not want folks to think that if I talked about my spiritual beliefs I was trying to convert them, to impose those beliefs on them in any way.

I began to speak more openly about the place of spirituality in my life when witnessing the despair of my students, their sense of hopelessness, their fears that life is without meaning, their profound loneliness and lovelessness. When young, bright, beautiful students would come to my office and confess their despondency, I felt it was irresponsible to just listen and commiserate with their woes without daring to share how I had confronted similar issues in my life. Often they would urge me to tell them how I sustained my joy in living. To tell the truth, I had to be willing to talk openly about spiritual life. And I had to find a way to talk about my choices that did not imply that they would be the correct or right choices for someone else.

My belief that God is love — that love is everything, our true destiny — sustains me. I affirm these beliefs through daily meditation and prayer, through contemplation and service, through worship and loving kindness. In the introduction to *Lovingkindness*, Sharon Salzberg teaches that the Buddha described spiritual practice as "the liberation of the heart which is love." She urges us to remember that spiritual practice helps us overcome the feeling of isolation, which "uncovers the radiant, joyful heart within each of us and manifests this radiance to the world." Everyone needs to be in touch with the needs of their spirit. This connectedness calls us to spiritual awakening — to love. In the biblical book of John, a passage reminds us that "anyone who does not know love is still in death."

All awakening to love is spiritual awakening. ●



Cultural critic and feminist theorist bell hooks is Distinguished Professor of English at City College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. This article is excerpted from her recent book, *All About Love: New Visions* (pp. 72–83), copyright © 2000 by Gloria Watkins. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., William Morrow.

TIBETANS'



The woman who whispered her prayers

My name is Ama Adhe and I am 65 years old. I spent 28 years of my life in eight different Chinese prisons as a political prisoner. My *chuba*, which is the traditional dress of both Tibetan men and women, became my protection at night in the cold and dampness of my small prison cell. I used my sleeve as a pillow, one side of my *chuba* as a mattress and the other side as a blanket, since in many of the prisons there was no other bedding or blankets. Often, when I worked in the prison vegetable gardens that fed the Chinese guards, my *chuba* became a secret hiding place where I would store and conceal food to bring to the other prisoners who were starving. I was caught and severely punished for this on many occasions.

The inscription you see on the flag in this photograph is the Dolma prayer. I attribute my survival to the ceaseless repetition of this prayer. When I was first in prison, I tore a strip of

WHISPERED PRAYERS

Practicing compassion in the midst of suffering

by Stephen R. Harrison

ASAGE ONCE SAID that the world is made up not of atoms but of stories. As a psychiatrist, I am allowed the privilege of bearing witness to these stories and helping their authors make some sense of them. People usually do not come to my door because of success so much as pain and suffering, and I witness daily the effects of unforeseen traumas and tragedies.

Although I am understandably somewhat desensitized from working with people who have been through traumatic experiences, I was not at all prepared for what I was to find in working with the Tibetans. I found 18-year-old nuns who had been raped, beaten and shocked with 7,000 volts from electric cattle prods. I found monks and nuns who had been suspended by their limbs and beaten for hours at a time. I found people who had been incarcerated and tortured over years and decades of time for no substantial reason. I found mothers and fathers bringing their children over 19,000-foot peaks in the middle of winter, only to leave them behind to be educated and probably never to see them again as the parents returned to their farms in Tibet. I found loss and tragedy everywhere. The stories were unending.

So were the steady stream of refugees. Winter and summer. Day and night. Mountains and plains. Their journeys were marked by starvation, subzero temperatures, severe snowfall, death from starvation, limb amputation from frostbite, retinal eye burns from snow blindness. By arrest and return to prison by the Chinese police. By repeated robbery in Nepal by the border patrol. By arrest in India for being an illegal refugee. Again and again, the list goes on: rape, assault, imprisonment, forced abortion and sterilization, beatings and beatings and more beatings.

Yet I found, in spite of the upheaval, many remarkable Tibetans who had graciously gone on with their lives. And with them, they brought their radiant lightheartedness, generosity, kindness and compassion. It was a sight that I would have normally not believed to be possible — how such severe trauma could be left so far behind and anger and hatred so minimal, how kindness can be a goal to be practiced intensely in daily life. “When you ask me if I feel angry at the Chinese government for what they have done to Tibet and the Tibetan people, I say, ‘No, I do not feel angry because nothing good can come out of anger,’” said one 75-year-old woman (her husband

cloth from my *chuba* and tied 108 knots in it to use as a rosary. It is a tradition for Tibetans to count the number of repetitions of our prayers because it helps us to maintain our attention and concentration. The Chinese guards noticed this knotted cloth and beat me. Then I began to say my prayers out loud in my small cell. The guards waited secretly outside, and whenever they heard the sounds of my prayers, they would again beat me. And so I learned to whisper my prayers. When they saw my lips moving, the guards placed duct tape over my mouth. I learned to say my prayers with my fingers and in my mind. When they saw my fingers moving, they beat me and placed duct tape over my fingers to prevent me from counting. And so it was that I learned to pray silently in my mind without making any gestures so the guards could see nothing at all. ▲

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Talisman Press, publishers of
Whispered Prayers: Portraits
and Prose of Tibetans in Exile
by Stephen R. Harrison with a
Foreword by His Holiness the
Fourteenth Dalai Lama and
Additional Essays by Anthony
Storr and Vicki Goldberg.*

TIBETANS' WHISPER



The Crossing

It was winter as the remaining three of us crossed the Himalayas to escape into India: my eight-year-old sister, a monk in his 60s, who became our guide, and me, a boy of six. The rest of our group were captured earlier in the expedition and taken away by the Chinese police.

At some point there were no trees on the steep mountainside we were going down. The stones were very slippery and we had nothing to hold on to. Because of the difficult descent, the monk told us to wait and he would go ahead to find the way. We waited and waited but he did not return. We began shouting for him. No one answered. My sister and I finally proceeded ahead, when all of a sudden we saw the monk's body in the canyon below, his fingers still clutching a handful of grass. He was dead. We cried for a long time and then we covered his body as best we could.

My sister advised me to climb back up the mountain to look for help while she stayed with the body. During the climb, I lost direction and could not find the road. When darkness fell, I called out for my sister. Again and again I shouted out my sister's name, hoping the winds would carry my voice to her. Nothing. I was so scared that I cried and trembled with fear. I found a cave inhabited by big birds, like chickens with long tails. I slept there for the next four nights without food or

RED PRAYERS

and nine children now all dead). "When I weave, I pray. And when I don't weave, I also pray. I pray for world peace and I pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I try to do 10,000 prayers for world peace each day. I count these prayers on my prayer beads."

The title of my book, *Whispered Prayers*, originated from the many conversations I had with Tibetans who were imprisoned and severely punished by Chinese guards for uttering their prayers. But to stop these prayers proved impossible. Tens of thousands of prayers uttered daily tethered their minds not to hatred and revenge, but to compassion and understanding.

My personal passage to India and my Tibetan project began in February of 1996. By nature I am not a political person and I knew almost nothing about Tibet, or China for that matter. I did not know, for example, that the Chinese government had initiated a series of invasions of Tibet in 1950 that, within the next decade, would result in the occupation of the whole of Tibet and the eventual death of over 1.2 million Tibetans — about one-sixth of the total population — due to political persecution, imprisonment, torture and famine. I was not aware of the destruction of 70 percent of the rich forest reserves, the massive dumping of nuclear wastes and the dynamiting of all but a handful of the 6,000 monasteries that before 1950 had dotted the Tibetan landscape. Nor did I know that over 130,000 Tibetan refugees had fled their motherland since those days. Rather, these numbers were all too enormous and abstract to be meaningful

to me, and I did not realize their significance in terms of the staggering weight of human suffering.

I traveled to India as a photographer. My journey began at the Tibetan Homes School, which is a large school of 1,500 refugee children, in Mussoorie. When the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Tibetans fled Tibet after the Chinese invasion, they traveled to Mussoorie, which is one of the old British hill stations that lie at an altitude of 6,000 feet. Three weeks later I departed for Dharamsala, where the Tibetan Government in Exile is located. I remained there for seven weeks. In November of 1996 I returned to both locations for an additional seven weeks and then on to other settlements. In 1997 I made a third trip to India for four weeks.

Most of the subjects in this presentation were interviewed with the assistance of a translator. Because of the sensitivity of the information presented as well as the attitude of the Chinese government, the identity of subjects has been protected as much as possible. As one 16-year-old boy who fled Tibet at the age of 12 said, "I tell this story for my country, but I request that you change all names and all dates. My parents have been very kind to me and I wouldn't want them to suffer." ●

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water. Each day I continued to yell for my sister. No one answered. On the fourth day, I heard hammering and left the cave to follow the sounds. They led to a power station and to a carpenter nearby, and then to the police, where I was held for two months before being sent back to my home in Tibet. My father returned to look for my sister, but no trace of her was found and she was given up for dead. A great sadness penetrated our home.

Time passed. I was 12 years old when I again tried to escape to India, this time with my younger sister and 10 other Tibetans. The long and terrible journey took 40 days. At last we arrived very early in the morning at the reception center in Kathmandu and fell asleep in the gardens. Two women came to awaken us and told us not to worry. I was sent to the Tibetan Homes School, and to my surprise my older sister was there, alive and well. Some monks had apparently heard her crying as they crossed the Himalayas for India and had brought her along.

Four years later my sister graduated. Unable to live away from our family, she returned to Tibet. Once again I do not know her whereabouts. I remain at the Tibetan Homes School determined to continue my education so I can help my country in its liberation. ▲

WHISPERED PRAYERS



The woman who sought her son's education

I am 38 years old and I have just arrived with my three-year-old son from Tibet. I decided to leave my home because it was time for my child to go to school. The education is inadequate in Tibet because it is taught by the Chinese. They brainwash children and teach what is not true. It is important that my child learn about his Tibetan heritage.

It took me five years to save enough money to leave and pay for our long journey to India. We traveled alone by bus to Mt. Kailash, which took seven days. I then paid a guide and we were able to join a group of 18 other people. There was only one other woman who had a child in this group. The remainder of the group consisted of monks and nuns.

From Mt. Kailash it took our group two months of walking to reach Nepal. It was winter, but we were fortunate because we had only two days of deep snow. I carried my child on my back with our bedding and food. I had no other clothes or shoes other than those that I am now wearing. It was very cold and I was always worried that my child might die. I prayed constantly that we would reach India and receive the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It was this determination and the love for my child that kept me going. I will be very sad to say good-bye to my little boy, but I feel I have no choice. Dharamsala is already overcrowded with refugees like myself who cannot find work. I will have to move on to somewhere else, leaving my child behind. ▲

DEADLY BETRAYAL

... and a return to childhood faith

by Nelson Johnson

THE FOG HUNG HEAVY over Greensboro, N.C., early on the morning of November 3, 1979. As one of the organizers of an anti-Klan march to be followed by a labor conference, I was

a little worried about the weather. Around 7AM I stopped by the home of Jim and Signe Waller, a Jewish couple, where we had breakfast together. Jim had left the medical faculty at Duke University to become an

organizer in a textile mill. Little did I know that this was the last time that we would ever have a meal together. In less than four hours Jim would be shot in the back.

By 10AM the fog had melted away and the



Police and protesters argue during a Malcolm X-birthday march to protest human rights violations against African Americans in 1992.

sunshine had burst through, transforming the day into a bright crisp fall morning. I was excited about the plans for the day. Impressive work had been done in the textile mills along a 75-mile stretch of the I-85 corridor and in communities in those mill towns. Greensboro was the center of our textile mill and community work. I felt that a lot of people would be joining the march and attending the labor conference. As a student leader at North Carolina A&T State University and a community organizer, I had organized a number of marches and rallies over the past 15 years. As usual, I was a little anxious before the big march and conference, but anticipating mill folk and folk from the black community getting together — a meeting long overdue, I felt like a wonderful day was taking shape.

This initial assessment would prove tragically wrong. By the morning of the next day, I wore clothes splattered with day-old dried blood — blood from five of my dear friends killed the day before by Klan and Nazi gunmen in the streets of Greensboro. I had spent a painful night locked up charged with inciting to riot after a paid police agent led a caravan of nine Klan and Nazi members into a legally planned march, where they killed five people, wounded 10 others and terrorized Morningside Homes, an African-American public housing community.

I had discussed the march with the police, painstakingly obtained a parade permit, and was assured of police presence and protection. I had had a difficult relationship with the Greensboro police since my student days 10 years earlier. The discussion with police immediately came to my mind as I peered through unbelieving eyes on that Saturday morning at the wounded and dying bodies of friends. As the blood of my loved ones was soaking into the ground, I stood over Jim's body and shouted with all the assurance that the Spirit could give me, "This could not have happened without direct police involvement and we declare war on you!"

Of course, I did not know of the police agent's organizing role or any of the other information that eventually came out in court after six long years that resulted in two leading police officers and six Klan and Nazi

party members being found liable for wrongful death. At the time, I just knew the police were deeply involved in this tragic event, and I spoke the truth as it was flowing through me. I was immediately charged with inciting to riot, wrestled to the ground and taken to jail. I remained in jail that night because the magistrate refused to set a bond as I was declared to be too great a danger to the peace and order of the city to be set free that day.

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Released by mid-morning on November 4, I was met by a small crowd of reporters and friends and informed of the names of those killed. They included not only Dr. Jim Waller and Sandy Smith, the beautiful black former Student Government President at Greensboro's all women's Bennett College, but also Michael Nathan, a Jewish doctor who was leading the first aid team for the planned four-mile march, Ce'sar Cauce, a wonderful brother of Hispanic origin, who organized among non-academic workers at Duke University, and William (Bill) Sampson, a Virginian by birth and the only Anglo-white. Bill had left divinity school at Harvard University a few years earlier to become a textile mill organizer in Greensboro.

Once out of jail I also gratefully learned that my eight- and nine-year-old daughters had been picked up by my youngest brother and taken to his home in Winston-Salem for

safety. My wife, Joyce, and I drove to a friend's house, as it was too dangerous to move back into our home. The next six days, leading up to the funeral of those killed, were the most intense, the most packed with counterintelligence maneuvering and growing tension, ever in my life and, I suspect, ever in the life of this community of 200,000 citizens — North Carolina's third largest city. These six days would portend the next six years, which involved an intense journey of survival for me and other members and friends of the Communist Workers Party (CWP). This journey involved a strange blending of vicious anti-communism and deep-seated racism, threading through three trials (averaging over five months each) related to the Klan/Nazi killings, the bringing of seven criminal charges against me, slander and vilification of those killed and those of us who survived on a scale that I had never seen before. Yet, all of this did not stop a powerfully inspired fight back and for me a rediscovery of my faith on a deeper level.

My faith was nurtured in the late 1940s and early 1950s on a farm near Littleton, in eastern North Carolina. We black folk formed a fairly tight rural community, but we were completely separated from whites except for the requirements of work. Religion was central to our village. My grandfather, for whom I was named and who died in 1932, was the founder and first pastor of Lee's Chapel Baptist Church. My father, now 92 years old, was a deacon in the church and my mother, who died at 87 in 1992, played the piano for the church choir. I grew up surrounded by religion and faith. It was so real and so profound for many people in our little village. As a child and teenager, I liked the singing and the preaching (preaching has a very lively form in the southern black rural tradition). However, the deeper substance and interiority of the faith never fully gripped me, although I am convinced that it gripped many other people in the community. I wanted to feel and believe as deeply as they seemed to feel and believe, I just didn't. But even with my shallow awareness, I was a believer, I went along

with what I understood the faith to be.

I suppose that part of the basis for my faith is because religion and church were the stabilizing force in the community. In fact, church was the only significant institution in the community other than the school. It served the role of being a community center, recreation center, old folks home, counseling service, arts and drama club, civic center and faith center, all wrapped into one. It was really the unifying epicenter of our village.

As for Jesus, I really didn't think much about who he was in my early years. I certainly didn't have a frame of reference on how or whether the human and divine dimensions came together in Jesus. Such theological reckoning was not even a thought. He was just the Savior, who did miracles, helped people and assured us that everything would be all right. In the midst of this racially oppressed and segregated community, Jesus helped us put up with "white folk" in the hope of going to heaven in another life. My faith did not grow out of well-considered reflection on the meaning of anything in particular. Rather, it was the acceptance — and I did accept it — of the general feeling, mood and beliefs in my small rural community. We believed that there was a God and that God would reward the good people and punish the bad people; Bible stories were told in such a way as to reinforce that. If you asked God, God would have mercy on you, even if you were mean, because he was a forgiving God. Such was my early faith training.

I matured slowly. People my age always seemed more grown-up than I was. Through my four years in the U.S. Air Force and later my growing involvement in the black liberation movement, particularly my study of Marxism, I gently laid aside many of my previous faith beliefs. There was so much about religion that didn't make sense to me in my late 20s and 30s. I gradually moved away from organized religion and dedicated my life to working among the poor. I was committed to doing what I could to help folk, including working with religious people and the church when I thought that would help. Although I did not make a public spectacle of it, I no longer considered myself to be a

confessing believer in the former sense.

During the six-year period after November 3, 1979, of being denounced, labeled, branded, stigmatized and ostracized, I was alternately drawn to reflecting more on faith and things of the Spirit and then pushed farther away from religion because I thought the church should have been doing more. In 1983 I believe I was serving a 20-day sentence for contempt of court. I had refused to stand when the judge entered the court because the court, in my opinion, was so corrupt. I had seen two all-white juries acquit all the Klan and Nazi gunmen of all criminal charges in spite of the fact that they were filmed by four television stations, calmly shooting people. I had lost all respect for the court.

While serving the 20 days, I went on a 20-day hunger strike to express further contempt for the court. An Episcopalian minister attached to the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, Henry Atkins, visited me in my jail cell one day and inquired as to my well-being. I didn't know him. He seemed like a very kind man. I sensed in him something very authentic. I asked him what he really believed. "Do you really believe there is a God and, if so, how do you explain the sort of thing that happened here in Greensboro and especially the role of church folks?" Honestly, I cannot remember exactly what Atkins said, but I remember what he didn't say, and I remember how I felt. He didn't give me the expected heavy-handed speech about how God was going to deliver me or punish someone else or the bit about my need to have more faith. As best I can recall, he shared a little about his life and about what God meant to him personally. It didn't sound all that strong at the time, but I felt it was genuine. It was enough for me to begin to wrestle anew with my own faith.

When I got out of jail, Atkins invited me to St. Mary's House, a little church adjacent to the college campus. About 25 Christian ministers were there, mostly white. They were courteous but obviously did not understand the depth of the systemic evil and the need for change.

From 1979 through 1984, I felt like I went through hell. I reached the end of my rope.

I spent many nights agonizing over what I needed to do in the future. Driven by circumstances and inspired by discussion with Atkins and others, I started to read the Scriptures a little. I went to a number of churches in the black community, trying to draw meaning from what was being preached. A black pastor who was particularly helpful to me was Otis L. Hairston of Shiloh Baptist Church. He was a quiet, unassuming man who preached a gentle gospel that not only invited individual transformation, but also challenged institutional powers and systemic evil. My family and I became members of Shiloh, and it was under Hairston's leadership that I was both protected and initially nurtured in the gospel ministry.

There was a warmth and reception of me in the black church that I had not received anywhere else. What I heard, however, often didn't seem to address the problems of the structured and the systemic evil. What these services did do was to reinvigorate my interest in Jesus. I started to focus on Jesus. As I did, I gradually discovered a person that I hadn't known existed. I was beginning to see how thoroughly Jesus opposed all the sources of evil rooted deeply in culture and manifested through systems. I also sensed a compelling compassion in him for everyone, especially for the poor. I could begin to see how deeply some people loved him and how much others hated him.

Out of the anguish and hardship born from the Klan and Nazi killings on November 3, 1979, I reluctantly returned to the faith of my childhood. Still seeing through a glass darkly, I began to discover in Jesus the kind of deep reliance on God that sustained Him in challenging the powers and principalities and enduring the cross. As I rediscover Jesus on deeper and deeper levels, a new world — the necessity for authentic community lived on the basis of very different assumptions — is opening up to me. It's a challenging but beautiful journey. ●

Nelson Johnson is pastor of Faith Community Church and Executive Director of the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro, N.C.

Vatican official calls for more just relationship with animals

John Thavis of Catholic News Service reports that a Dec. 7 article in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, titled "For a More Just Relationship With Animals" questions humanity's unqualified license to kill or inflict suffering on animals. Written by Marie Hendrickx, a longtime official of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the article says that the cramped and cruel methods used in the modern food industry, for example, may cross the line of morally acceptable treatment of animals.

Hendrickx said that in view of the growing popularity of animal rights movements, the church needs to ask itself to what extent Christ's dictum, "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you," can be applied to the animal world.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says it is legitimate for humans to use animals for food and clothing, and to domesticate them for work or leisure.

But Hendrickx pointed out that a small but significant change in

wording was made between the catechism's first edition and its official Latin edition on use of animals for medical experimentation. Such experiments are now called morally acceptable only if they contribute to caring for or saving human lives.

Moreover, the catechism says that in general it is "contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly."

Hendrickx said the question today is whether "the right to use animals to feed oneself implies raising chicken in cages that are each smaller than a notebook. Or raising calves in boxes where they cannot move or see the light of day? Or pinning down sows with iron rings into a nursing position so that piglets can suck the milk without ever stopping, and thus grow faster?"

Likewise, she questioned whether the right to dress oneself with animal skins meant it was morally acceptable to let fur-bearing creatures die slowly in traps from hunger, cold or bleeding.

Hendrickx also questioned treatment of animals in traditional spectacles that have survived into the modern age, like bull-fighting or "throwing cats or goats off a bell-tower." She was referring to the tradition in a Spanish town of tossing a goat from a 50-foot bell tower into a piece of tarpaulin, to mark the beginning of the festival of St. Vincent, the town's patron saint. The town gave up the practice last year after years of protest from animal rights groups.

Global trade and HIV/AIDS first priorities for new alliance

A unique, broadly ecumenical body launched in Geneva last December has pledged itself to tackle issues of global trade and HIV/AIDS. For each issue, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance will develop an educational approach as well as a specific strategy.

Participants in the founding meeting of the Alliance vowed to "speak out with one voice against injustice, to confront structures of power, practices and attitudes which deprive human beings of dignity and to offer alternative visions based on the Gospel."

Participants noted in their final *communiqué* that the Alliance "will be a flexible and open instrument enabling participating organizations from the broad ecumenical family to work strategically on priorities identified as common to our witness and work."

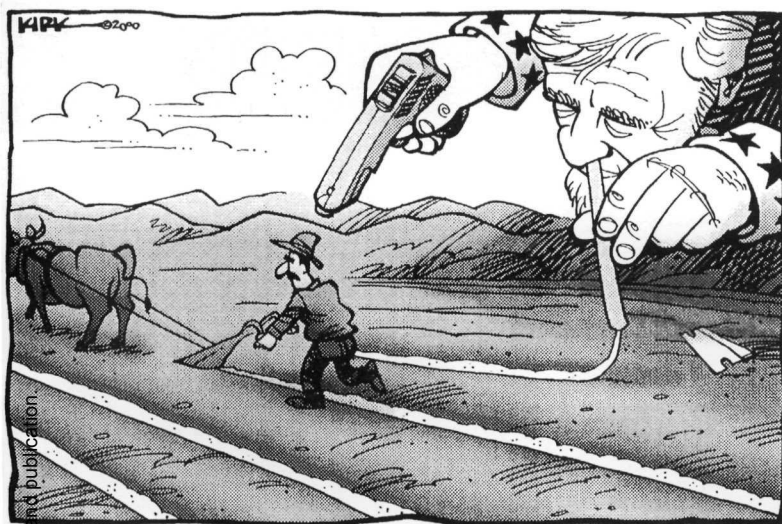
The founding meeting included 40 people from all continents representing the World Council of Churches (WCC), regional ecumenical organizations and fellowships, church agencies, specialized networks in the South, Christian world communions, international ecumenical and Roman Catholic organizations. The meeting was convened by the WCC.

In his opening address to the founding meeting, WCC general secretary Konrad Raiser said the time has come to take a courageous new step together to promote justice, peace and the integrity of creation. "The Alliance intends to continue and strengthen a commitment [whose] roots go back to the very beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. The Gospel must not remain a message of

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Community and religious leaders blocked the entrance to the Detroit News garage on March 6, 1996, eight months into the strike against the Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News and Detroit Newspapers, Inc., by unions representing editorial and production workers. Among those pictured here are the retired Episcopal Bishop of Michigan, Coleman McGehee (second from right) and The Witness' Bill Wylie-Kellermann (far left). An intense and often volatile labor dispute, the strike effectively ended this past December when members of two teamsters locals endorsed a "last and final offer." An economic and editorial boycott of the newspapers by the community reportedly cost their parent companies, Gannett and Knight Ridder, nearly \$500 million in lost profits and strike-related costs and a third of their local circulation. During the strike hundreds of community leaders would not speak to the dailies in protest of the newspapers' management practices.



COLOMBIA Policy

private salvation but [must] be translated into acts of justice and peace, affirming human dignity and offering reconciliation and fullness of life for all."

Speaking to representatives from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Pacific, Raiser said the past 10 years have seen not only the dismantling of the communist system and the end of the Cold War, but also the rapid expansion of globalization — with dramatic effects on the lives of people all over the world, particularly in the South. "The gulf between rich and poor is widening both within and between countries and we witness the spread of a culture of violence. The number of refugees has increased dramatically and prospects for containing or reversing ecological degradation are vanishing."

From a list of 170 suggested issues, the meeting selected global economic justice, with a focus on global trade, and ethics of life, with a focus on HIV/AIDS, for attention over the next four years.

The meeting's final *communiqué* noted that global trade is dominated by a few economic powers: transnational corporations, governments and multilateral institutions. This makes it extremely difficult for many countries to access world markets equitably. "Advocacy work is particularly needed at the level of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Union," participants said.

The *communiqué* identified the HIV/AIDS pandemic as one of the gravest challenges to health and also "to prospects of social and economic development and global security." HIV/AIDS' impact is a symptom of "systematic economic problems such as under-investment in health and unequal access to effective treatment." It is thus a particularly appropriate issue for churches, the *communiqué* said; while governments and private companies need to be involved, "churches need to speak out on causes, prevention, treatment and consequences."

"The Christ we follow tells us that when we minister to the sick, the hungry, the stranger and the prisoner, we are ministering to Christ himself. His identification with the marginalized, his rage at the moneylenders and his willingness to challenge established social

boundaries in view of the Kingdom of God lead us to a life of confronting unjust structures of power in solidarity with the excluded. With this conviction and with trust in the grace of God, we launch this Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance," states the final *communiqué*.

The full text of the Alliance document, "A Covenant for Action," as well as of this *communiqué* are available by request, from <e-alliance@wcc-coe.org>. The *communiqué* is also on the WCC website at <www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/00/communiqué.html>.

CLASSIFIEDS

Congress on Urban Ministry

Learn, share, worship and celebrate with Sr. Helen Prejean, Tony Campolo, Altagracia Perez, Bill Wylie-Kellermann, Robert Franklin and many others at the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Ministry's (SCUPE) 25th-anniversary conference on urban and justice ministry, March 27–31, 2001 in Chicago. Contact SCUPE at 312-726-1200, <congress@scupe.com>, <www.scupe.com>, or 200 N. Michigan Ave. #502, Chicago, IL 60601.

L'Arche Harbor House

L'Arche Harbor House, a Christian community in Jacksonville, Fla., invites you to assist in creating community with persons who are developmentally disabled. Requirements: dedicated people who want to live the Gospel in community life, who desire to live with, learn from and relate with adults with disabilities. Responsibilities: help create a home based on the Beatitudes, develop relationships with members, assist with personal care and community living. Benefits: Americorps site, stipend, room, board, health insurance, and formation in the spirituality and philosophy of L'Arche. To apply, contact Dottie Klein, 700 Arlington Road, Jacksonville, FL 32211, 904-744-4435; <larchfl@aol.com>.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 2001–2002 year. Contact EUIP, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. Phone: 310-674-7700. Email: <euip@pacbell.net>.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

An Episcopal religious community-in-formation for men and women; single, committed and married; living, working and ministering in the world; striving for justice and peace among all people. Write: Order of Jonathan Daniels, The Cathedral Church of Saint Luke, 143 State Street, Portland, ME 04101; <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

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