



VOLUME 85
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MOVING TO CHANGE THE WORLD

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Jews and Palestinians join
in urging an end to Israeli
occupation of the Palestinian
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Washington, D.C.
© Harvey Finkle

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The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *The Witness* magazine and related web site projects, seeks to give voice to a liberation Gospel of peace and justice and to promote the concrete activism that flows from such a Christianity. Founded in 1917 by Irving Peake Johnson, an Episcopal Church bishop, *The Witness* claims a special mission to Episcopalians and other Anglicans worldwide, while affirming strong partnership with progressives of other faith traditions.

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LETTERS

End the aid

FACT: No other nation in the entire world supports the position of Israel and the United States in the present military invasion of the West Bank and Gaza.

FACT: U.S. taxpayers have given at least \$90 billion in military and economic aid to Israel, and, according to best estimates, that aid continues to run at a level of about \$4 billion every year.

FACT: Because of this military and economic support, U.S. taxpayers are directly complicit in the widespread destruction of Palestinian life in the West Bank and Gaza which has been wrought by American-made F-16 jets, Apache helicopters, and tanks of the Israeli Defense Forces.

FACT: The continued occupation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the continually increasing number of Israeli settlements in those territories, is clearly contrary to international law embodied in the Geneva Conventions and numerous United Nations Resolutions.

FACT: It is the unanimous opinion of Palestinian and other Arab voices that the occupation of Palestinian territories both gives rise to Palestinian suicide attacks and is the central block to any peace settlement.

THEREFORE: The overwhelming diplomatic power of the United States should be used to declare that unless the State of Israel agrees to end the occupation and dismantle the settlements now, all military and economic aid will be immediately terminated.

Thomas E. Ambrogi

Claremont, CA

Wholesome approach to ministry

I enjoyed reading the interview with Carol Gallagher (TW 4/02). Just one minor correction. As a Canadian Anglican priest may I draw to your attention that Bishop Gordon Beardy, a Cree Native, resigned as Bishop of Keewatin for the very same [family] reasons

as Bishop Charleston. He surprised the Canadian Church by his resignation, but the reasons given may lead to a more wholesome approach to our mutual ministries.

Enjoy your publication.

Geoffrey Howson

Anglican Diocese of Montreal

'Lord, how long?'

the killing ovens of Auschwitz ...

the 'killing fields' of Vietnam ...

the killing caves of Afghanistan ...

the killing streets of Jerusalem ...

The Psalmist cried out,

"Lord, how long?! ..."

Jesus taught us,

"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

Lord, how long? ...

Mary K. Rouillard

Fort Edward, NY

A knockout

Your March issue is a knockout, with Julie Wortman's commentary a big plus. Is she related to Tunis Wortmen (1822), an American lawyer who said, "It is impossible that the imagination should conceive a more horrible and pernicious tyranny than that which should restrain Intercourse of Thought"? Her editorial suggests a true relationship. I congratulate her. And I envy her daily walk with her dogs on "coastal Maine" waving a global flag. Your March cover, flaunting a wonderful placard stating, "Why do we kill people who killed people to show that killing people is wrong?" with a page 7 placard stating "No U.S. War for Big Oil" is devastating. These remind me of our pioneer days on *The Churchman* where I learned values.

Edna Ruth Johnson

Editor Emeritus

The Human Quest

(founded as *The Churchman* in 1804)

St. Petersburg, FL

The time has come (again) to move

by Julie A. Wortman

LAST APRIL I found myself writing a letter to the *Christian Science Monitor* complaining about its lack of coverage of a speech given by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Boston's Old South Church. [And I hereby apologize for that letter: The very next day the *Monitor* ran a thought-provoking inside piece about Tutu and other progressive Christians who are calling for peace with justice for Palestinians and Israelis alike, a call that is quite different from the pro-Israel position of evangelical Christian Zionists.] About 500 people heard Tutu say that the situation in the Occupied Territories is "even worse than under apartheid [in South Africa]" (see www.thewitness.org/agw

for the full text of his speech).

Surely this veteran of the South African liberation movement should know. But both U.S. leaders and the mainstream press have discounted the importance of his perspective on the conflict. Perhaps this is because, as many now say, the U.S. Congress is just another of the Israeli Occupied Territories.

I'm enraged that this should be so. Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories is unjust, pure and simple. As Tutu observed, "The Arab nations made a mistake in not recognizing Israel's sovereignty [following partition]. So it is understandable that Israel would be nervous and on military alert. But what is not all right is what Israel has done

to others to maintain its security." The litany of U.N. resolutions that Israel has violated is long. U.S. complicity in their violation is stunning. I find myself itching to do something to shift the situation, like signing on to be part of a peacemaker delegation or to serve as a human-rights monitor.

Only a few weeks earlier I had called each of Maine's U.S. senators urging their opposition to drilling for oil in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Somehow, for the person now occupying the White House, oil drilling in ANWR (and in other wilderness areas) is so crucial to U.S. national security that both the rights of the Gwich'in people and the welfare of one of earth's last pristine wilderness areas are worth the sacrifice. Attacking Iraq is to be next. I find myself preparing for more resistance.

I'm not sure what is happening to me. I'm not usually an outraged letter-writer or phone-caller. I've never met the criteria of "activist." I've participated in Washington protest marches about a half dozen times. Been arrested in a pretty no-risk way at the Nevada Test Site. Refused to pay my phone tax during the Vietnam War. Worked to set up a homeless shelter. Banned factory-farmed meat from my diet. Been an election monitor in El Salvador. Stopped patronizing big-box chains. Boycotted my city's newspaper to support striking journalists. Protested construction of a nuclear power plant and vigiled outside a nuclear-weapons factory.

But I've never belonged to an affinity group planning civil disobedience, never done jail time, never helped organize a single direct action or protest, never walked a picket line. I've simply made my witness as my outrage and conscience have dictated. Moved when moved. Changed my life when I couldn't live with myself if I didn't. Spoken up when silence seemed an act of violence



Concepcion Picciotto, a long-time peace activist

The Witness wins Associated Church Press awards

We're pleased to announce that The Witness magazine won two first-place Awards of Excellence and two Awards of Merit at the Associated Church Press 2001 Awards in Birmingham, Ala., last April.

With a global vision and concern for all who struggle for liberation *The Witness* magazine balances analysis, opinion and reflection with a unique blend of reporting, essays, interviews, poetry, photography and media reviews. A thematic approach to topics encourages depth and allows for nuance. *The Witness*, founded in 1917 by Episcopal Bishop Irving Peake Johnson, is published by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

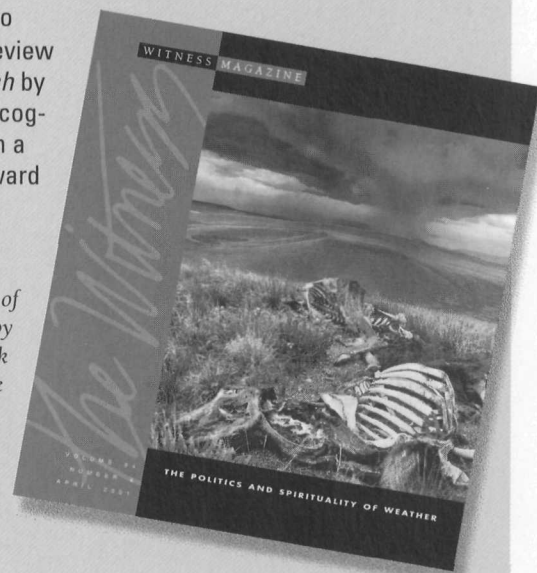
■ In presenting the prestigious Award of Excellence for Best in Class for the second year in a row, the judges said *The Witness* "tackles important subjects with good writing and editing throughout, uses good art and photos, is excellent all-around."

■ Outstanding design was recognized with an Award of Excellence for Magazine Cover: 1, 2, or 3 Color for the April 2001 cover. The issue was entitled "The politics and spirituality of weather." The judges commented, "This is a well-designed cover. The photo is intriguing and compelling and draws viewers in. The space is used well and the simple design is visually appealing."

■ "The Gwich'in and ANWR" by Murray Carpenter in the January/February 2001 issue won the Feature Story Award of Merit, the judges praising it as a "nice synthesis of material, a well-written, well-organized piece, informative and thorough."

■ "'Grace — is a transgender person who loves women and men,'" Mary E. Hunt's review of *Omnigender: A Trans-religious Approach* by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott commanded recognition for "intelligent opinions presented in a clear, concise way." This work won an Award of Merit in the category of Critical Review Section in the July/August 2001 issue.

The Associated Church Press is a community of communication professionals brought together by faithfulness to their craft and by a common task of reflecting, describing and supporting the life of faith and the Christian community. Members represent nearly 160 publications, with a combined circulation of nearly 28 million in print and countless others on the Internet.



and destruction.

Somehow, it seems, the time has come, again, for me to stand up and be counted — to play a part in this global movement for social change that appears to be finding fresh energy and clarity through the calls to "End the Occupation" and stop oil drilling in what remains of the wild.

But I don't fool myself that my willingness to act now has much to do with the strength of my personal moral compass. In fact, I credit any justice-making I've ever been involved with to the activist movement-builders in this world and their steady, usually uphill, efforts to keep people like me awake, urging us to show up, take action, embody the values we claim to hold dear. As James M. Jasper, the author of *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago U. Press, 1997), points out, the witness of these tireless social-change activists is crucial to society's moral health. "Protest quickly gets at the deepest moral questions," Jasper says. "How should we live our lives; what are our moral responsibilities, and to whom?"

Archbishop Tutu told those gathered at Old South Church last April that he is heartened by the "End the Occupation" protests by college students, Women in Black, Israeli soldiers and others. "We're free [in South Africa] because of people who cared even when it seemed impossible [that apartheid could be overcome]," he said. "God has no one except ourselves. God doesn't dispense lightning bolts to depose tyrants. God says, 'You are my partners.'"

Movement activists, it seems, understand this better than most. Now, more than ever, I'm grateful for their witness and the way it empowers mine. ●

Julie A. Wortman is Witness editor/publisher.

'I want to organize and agitate, but I also want to pray'

by Laura E. Crossett

IN 1969, A GROUP OF STUDENTS at Grinnell College turned the American flag upside down as a protest against the Vietnam War. My father, then a professor at Grinnell, spent a good part of the next two days standing beneath the flag, hand on the halyard, to prevent anyone from doing so again.

My mother told me this story when I was a freshman in high school and en route to a protest against the Persian Gulf War. I pointed out that, had I been there, I probably would have been one of the people trying to turn the flag upside down. "Yes," she said. "You and your father would have disagreed about a number of things. Call if you need to be bailed out."

Mostly I tell this as a funny story, but in

fact I've been thinking about it for many years—turning a flag upside down may not

Smashing up the windows of Starbucks, while satisfying in a certain way, is not going to help.

seem like much, but in Grinnell, Iowa, it's a very extreme tactic. As an activist, I am con-

stantly thinking about how to proceed — about how to make the best strategic decision, about how to be true to yourself and what you believe, about how to reconcile the difference between those who just want to witness and those who want to print everything in Impact font, and how to do this all in the face of what seem like overwhelming odds — in the face of a system — call it global capitalism, call it what you will — that seems relentlessly determined to crush most of what I consider precious in the world.

A few days after September 11, I put Phil Ochs's song "The War is Over" on my stereo on continuous repeat, and I've been listening to it almost every day since.

One might say, quite accurately, that I was being a little premature. But Ochs wrote the song in 1967, when the Vietnam War had not even reached its peak. In those years, the people trying to end the war were going increasingly nuts. They'd moved from protest to resistance: It wasn't enough to rally on the streets; they had to shut down induction centers. It wasn't enough to march on Washington; they had to try to levitate the Pentagon. Eventually, for some, it wasn't enough until they'd given their whole lives to the struggle, until they were fighting in the streets, destroying property, trying to bring the war home.

Yet what Ochs needed in 1967 was to declare that the war was over, and what I needed, even back in September, even as I was helping to build a new anti-war movement, was to hear that the war was a state of mind: that if I believed it enough, the war could be over.

I didn't mention this to the people I was



Laura Crossett shows her UE Local 896-COGS card — the graduate employee union at the University of Iowa (she was Labor Solidarity Chair this past year) during a lull in a protest at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga., last November.

Working for the common good

working with: people who believed we just had to write enough letters, or get enough people to a demonstration, or dismantle the war machine and the forces of globalization by any means necessary.

I know kids now who are involved in Black Bloc. I don't join them: I can't. When I can, I try to persuade them that smashing up the windows of Starbucks, while satisfying in a certain way, is not going to help — and that undoubtedly that destruction will have to be cleaned up by low-wage laborers — the very people whose side (I'd like to think) we are on. But I know also that there are days when I want to smash things, as much as there are days when I want to move to the mountains, become a hermit, and pray. When we evaluate the actions of others, we must take care to make a very careful distinction between the action and the people behind that action, and we need to try to understand the ways in which the systems which surround that person have led to the kinds of actions they've taken. We must strive as well to try to understand, respect, and deal with the terrible toll that living in this world and working to resist and change its systems can take on us.

I don't know what ended the Vietnam War (supposing, that is, that it did in fact end), or what it will take to end this war, or to stop the global economic forces that lie behind it. I want to get out there and educate and organize and agitate, but I also want to pray: I want to believe that believing in a better world is the best way possible to change it.

Where the balance between these is, I do not know. I know only that we must, if we want to change the world, first change ourselves, and practice forgiveness. ●

Laura E. Crossett is a 26-year-old writer and activist. Most recently, she's worked with University of Iowa Students Against Sweatshops, with a local anti-war coalition, Iowans For Peace, and with the UI's graduate employee union, UE Local 896-COGS.

MOST PEOPLE describe working for the common good as memorable, and contrast this with their day-to-day work. They refer to their daily jobs as “the real world.” The experiences that give them energy and hope are labeled as unique or different. What keeps us from seeing these experiences of human goodness and talent as real? Why do we take what's boring and destructive and call that the real world? How did we develop such poor expectations for what's possible when we work together?

What if we used our experiences of working for the common good as the standard? We would stop tolerating work and lives that gradually dissolve our belief in each other. We might begin to insist on the conditions that bring out our best. If we stopped accepting the deadening quality of “the real world,” if we raised our expectations, then it wouldn't take a crisis for us to experience the satisfaction of working together, the joy of doing work that serves other human beings.

And then we would discover, as the Chinese author of the *Tao Te Ching* wrote 2600 years ago, that “the good becomes common as grass.”

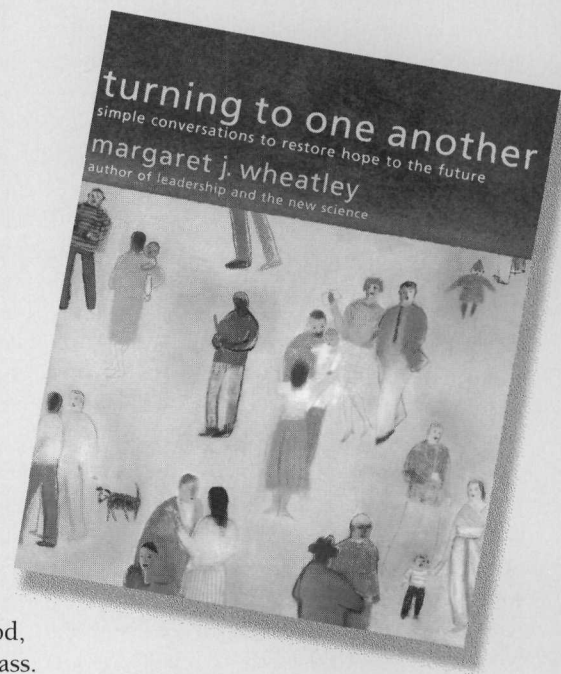
If you want to be a leader ...
stop trying to control.
Let go of fixed plans and concepts,
and the world will govern itself.

The more prohibitions you have,
the less virtuous people will be.
The more weapons you have,
the less secure people will be.
The more subsidies you have,
the less self-reliant people will be.

Therefore the Master says:
I let go of the law,
and people become human.
I let go of economics,
and people become prosperous.
I let go of religion,
and people become serene.
I let go all desire for the common good,
and the good becomes common as grass.

(*Tao Te Ching*, 600 B.C. China, Stephen Mitchell, translator)

— from *turning to one another: simple conversations to restore hope to the future*, by Margaret J. Wheatley (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 2002).



BUILDING A NEW

An interview with Jan Adams and Rebecca Gordon

by Ethan Flad

JAN ADAMS AND REBECCA GORDON are among the founders of *War Times* (www.war-times.org), a national anti-war tabloid created to help broaden and deepen the fight against the Bush administration's "permanent war against terrorism at home and abroad." *War Times* is to be "a free, mass-produced, nationally distributed tabloid-sized newspaper" that the editors hope will be "a valuable outreach and education tool for organizers on the ground and an entryway for new people into the peace and justice movement." Until recently, Jan Adams was associate director of the Applied Research Center in Oakland, Calif. She is now an electoral and community-organizing consultant. She was a founder of a statewide political advocacy organization, Californians for Justice, and has been a long-time activist in solidarity with people's struggles in South Africa and Central America. Many years ago she was a member of Catholic Worker communities in New York and San Francisco. Rebecca Gordon, who is now in seminary at Starr King School for the Ministry at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif., has spent many years in political work, including in movements for women's liberation, racial justice and in solidarity with the peoples of Central America. She was a founding editor of *Lesbian Contradiction: A Journal of Irreverent Feminism* (along with Adams) and is the author of *Letters From Nicaragua* and *Cruel & Usual: How Welfare Reform Punishes Poor People* (Applied Research Center, 2001). The two women are life partners.

Ethan Flad: Last fall Jan told me, "There is the need for a new peace movement." So I want to start out by talking about how you define a movement — and what is the need for a peace movement at this time?



Rebecca Gordon: To start with, there's a difference between a movement and an organizing project. A movement develops its own momentum — it's inherent in the meaning of the word. It becomes bigger than the people who started it, because it arises in response to particular historical conditions. Unless the seed falls on good ground, you're not going to get a mustard plant. You're not going to get anything. But when the ground is there — and the ground is very often there both because of obvious injustice and wrong that needs to be corrected and because people perceive there is some possibility that it could be corrected — it's possible for a movement to take hold. When that happens, what you will see is not just one single set of leaders that are directing something in one particular direction. More what you will see is a lot of organizations and people surfing a wave that is moving in a particular direction. We at *War Times* all think that, since September 11th, we are in a moment that is both horrific in what it threatens, but also in which it is possible to break through the typical U.S. refusal to look outside the borders of the country. The permanent "war on terrorism" is opening people's eyes in a new way to the activities of the U.S. government around the world. A lot of these activities

are the things that Jan and I have spent the last 20 years trying to reveal — the so-called "low-intensity warfare" in Central America, the U.S. complicity in the apartheid regime in South Africa, the various counter-insurgency projects that the U.S. has been involved in, now in Colombia, for example. These are all things that in some sense haven't really increased, although certainly the war in Afghanistan has stepped things up, but this is a moment when people can become aware of them in a different way.



Jan Adams: A movement is not professional. It is something that is done in volunteer activities, because people feel that they have to. Growth of the non-profit sector in the last 40 years has had great effect on inhibiting what I think of as movement activity. Because it's professionalized the work — people expect to make a living at it. Certainly, these professionals have better training and have more idea of what they're doing and possibly spin their wheels less, but they're all tied up in strategic planning processes and fulfillment of grant conditions and are not available to respond to realities on the ground in quite the same way as they would if they were doing it as voluntary activity. We won't have major, large-scale movements in this country unless we have that. I think it's possible that the "war on terrorism" has created a situation where a broad mass of people in this country, maybe 3 percent, feel like they have to have a movement.

PEACE MOVEMENT

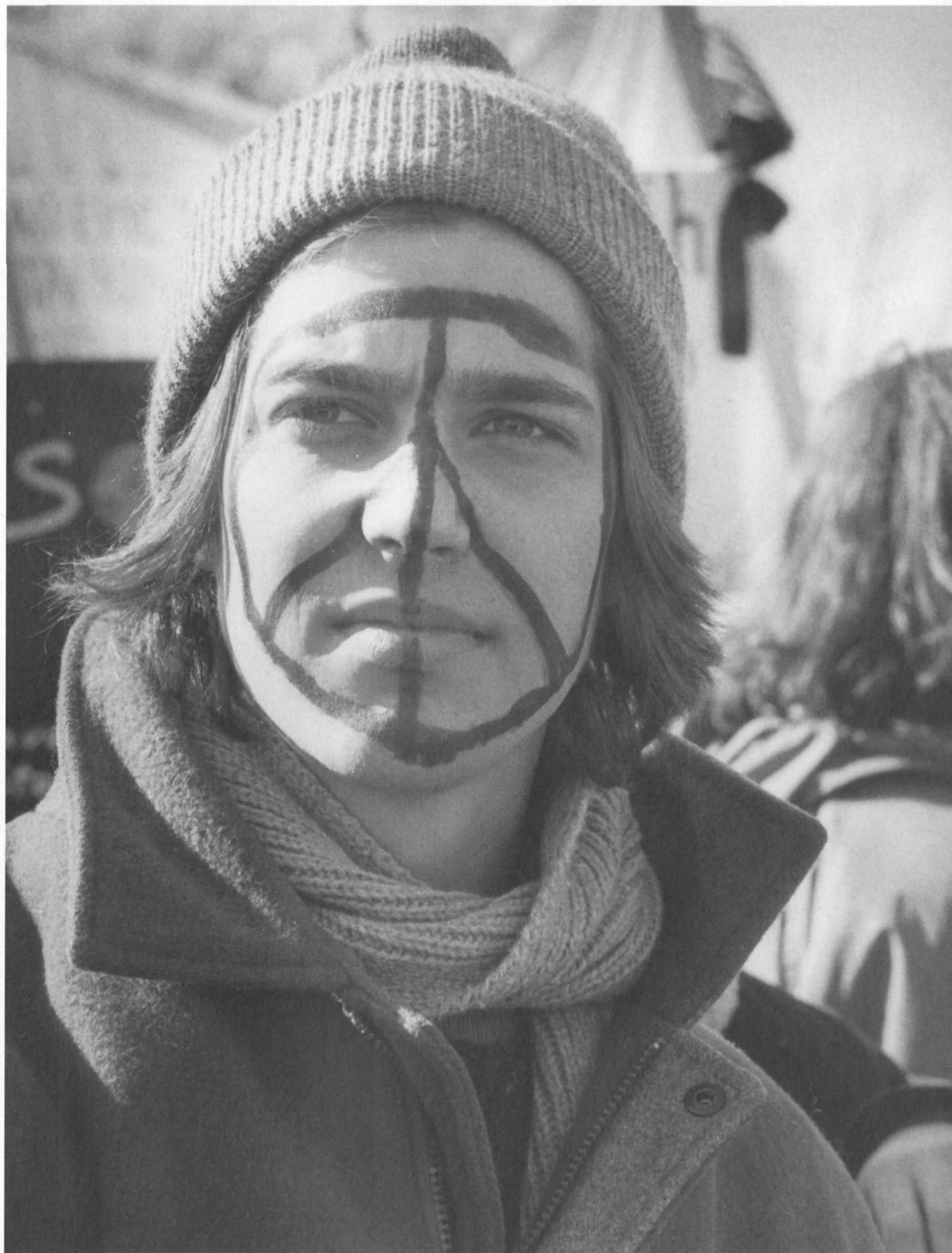
Rebecca Gordon: But 3 percent is sufficient to really ...

Jan Adams:... do an enormous amount! It becomes possible to build various kinds of infrastructure to support that activism. That's what *War Times* is — it's providing the kind of infrastructure that a peace movement would need.

Rebecca Gordon: At the close of the efforts to stop the U.S. war in Vietnam and in subsequent movements, a lot of people made a fetish of information. People thought the problem was: "The mainstream media isn't covering it and if we could just get the information in peoples' hands, then the movement would happen." But although yes, there's a lot that people don't know — and the knowledge base of the U.S. public has been intentionally eroded, in my lifetime certainly — the fact is, information does not make a movement. Showing people that there is something that they can do and that there are other people who are doing something — that's what makes a movement. That's what gives people hope. So *War Times* would not be a project I was interested in if it were only going to be read by a bunch of lefties, who would say, "Yeah, that's right, I totally agree with that. Ain't it awful." The point is that it tells people, "Oh, I'm not the only one who feels this way, and in Fresno there's been a vigil every Friday night since September 11th saying war is not the answer. We could do something like that here in Peoria."

Ethan Flad: So you can't even think of starting a movement without knowing that there are lots of people out there who are already trying to do something?

Rebecca Gordon: Or another way of saying it is, people try to start movements all the time, and most of the time they don't go anywhere because the moment isn't there. With the civil rights movement there were a



whole bunch of things that came together at once that made that movement possible: the end of World War II, the experience of black soldiers overseas and how that compared with what they found when they came back to the U.S., the U.S. government's competition with the Soviet Union for colonial power in Third World countries which made it no longer useful to have this embarrassing problem in the southern U.S. Rosa Parks could have refused to stand up in the bus, but if a bunch of things hadn't also been in place, it wouldn't have made a difference. At the same time, it's also important to remember that Rosa Parks was not just a random woman who decided not to give up her seat because she was tired. She was an organizer who had trained at the Highlander School [in Tennessee], and who conceived of herself as being part of organizing a movement. So it takes those two things. It takes the willingness to go out there and hope that there's going to be a wave to catch. And it takes the wave.

Jan Adams: Movements take off when people go beyond their everyday activities and are prepared to accept some level of personal sacrifice.

Rebecca Gordon: Too often this is overlooked. In addition to fetishizing information, we fetishize certain tactics as being a movement, or as being the content of the movement. So, for example, there's a whole culture now of "getting arrested": the nonviolence training that's the preparation for getting arrested and the whole ritual in the court where you get to make your statement about why you chose to get arrested. But the risk of arrest that black people faced in the South meant something very different and functioned on a different level than what happens when a group of white people negotiate the terms of their arrest.

Ethan Flad: What made the two of you so involved in movement stuff?

Jan Adams: We're different. I've never been particularly ideological. I think I have a vocation to go where the action is. So if something that seems liberatory is moving people, I am drawn to it. As I've become an experienced person, I am then drawn to try-

ing to help it work.

Rebecca Gordon: I was brought up in a home where it was important to know what was happening and it was important to be there if there was a movement happening. So my mother essentially brought me up to be an activist by example — by the kinds of things that she drew my attention to from my earliest childhood. When I think about Christianity and the meaning of Incarnation, part of the way that I believe the Divine is incarnated in the world is in that struggle for justice and liberation. So in a sense it's my connection, however tenuous, to the Divine that has in some way kept



me doing all of this. That doesn't mean it's always pure delight. It can be extremely unpleasant working with your *compañeros* sometimes, but there is real joy in feeling that you are part of something that is bigger than you are, that began before you were born and is going to go on, God willing, long after you die.

Jan Adams: When I was managing the Northern California campaign against Prop. 187, a 1994 California statewide initiative which denied social services and education to undocumented immigrants, that was being in a movement. That was one of the

most extraordinary campaigns I ever had anything to do with because Prop. 187 was such a violent violation of basic humanity. That's how it was experienced in the Latino community — that for some reason the State of California wanted to turn around and tell them: Your children should starve and they shouldn't be allowed in schools.

Rebecca Gordon: And they shouldn't have health care.

Jan Adams: My job was to take this incredible outpouring of feeling of injustice and turn it into something effectual in an election. There wasn't a huge amount you could do, but we did enormously well where we were able to give people outreach activities. It was unbelievably painful. During that time period I had on the wall a poster with a picture of a Guatemalan woman and a poem that said in Spanish: "We have more death than they do, but we have more life than they do." Very often that is profoundly the condition of people in struggle. I felt that somewhat with some of the people I worked with in South Africa. And we've certainly felt that in the civil rights movement here.

Rebecca Gordon: I worked with Witness for Peace, living in the war zones in Nicaragua for six months in 1984. Living in a war is the most bizarre thing because you are simultaneously preparing for death tomorrow and planning for things that might not come to fruition for another 20 years! So it's this strange dual consciousness. But in that context, you could sense among the people who were part of it that they were both very much more aware of death, because they were losing people all the time, and more aware of the life that they were hoping for and that they were, with their own hands, trying to construct.

Jan Adams: So I think we think a movement is the thing that unleashes the forces that carry people very near to that place where life or death are close.

Ethan Flad: You mentioned Rosa Parks. Hearing about Central America brings to mind the Mothers of the Disappeared; and what you're talking about right now strongly evokes the Middle East, and I'm thinking

about the Women in Black. Do women bring to movements a different consciousness?

Rebecca Gordon: Yes, but it might not be what you would think. There is a way that women understand that you can't be in struggle forever, that it is impossible for an individual, a community, a country, a family to live its entire life at that pitch of revolutionary fervor. It tears the soul apart. The Sandinistas were voted out of office in 1990. Part of the reason was that the women in that country knew that as long as they were in power, the U.S. was going to continue to make war on them. They were never going to stop sending their kids off to be killed and the war was not going to stop. Now you could say the women were reactionary or a conservatizing force or something like that. But I don't think that's true. Women are often at the very front of movements. But I think we're also sometimes a brake on the romanticizing of war and violence. I think we understand better why peace is necessary. I think that's as true in cities that are torn up by gang warfare as it is in Palestine today.

Ethan Flad: With all the work you've done over the years, what's brought you in the last couple of years to what you're doing now?

Jan Adams: That's a good question. The last thing I wanted to be doing was trying to build a peace movement at this moment. But we need a peace movement, so I guess I have to try to build one. I never really quite know how I made those transitions. And I'm not sure I know any more now than I did 15 years ago. But as I said earlier, I have in me this sense of, "OK, I've got a responsibility to put my shoulder to the wheel," where something liberatory is happening. And I've had a wonderful life as a consequence.

Rebecca Gordon: We do an awful lot of pointing each other in directions that we might not go otherwise. We spent the first summer we met, when I was 13 and she was 18, arguing about the war in Vietnam. I was opposed to it; she wasn't sure. We've been arguing about politics every since. I dragged her into the movement to oppose what the U.S. was doing in Central America, and we spent a large chunk of the 1980s doing work

about that and trying to support those revolutions. Because — well, for their own precious selves — but also because they represented some hope in a hopeless world. And she pulled me, in the 1990s, into an involvement in electoral politics, which is actually one of my least favorite activities. But it has the benefit of being a place where you can really give people the experience of working together in an effective way, in an organized way that's very powerful.

I also pulled/pushed us into doing stuff in the early 1980s in the women's movement, into publishing *Lesbian Contradiction: A Journal of Irreverent Feminism*, which we did for 12 years. It was never gigantic, but it was influential in its own little way.

Ethan Flad: How did you get to seminary?

Rebecca Gordon: I had come to the point in about 1999–2000 when it felt as though a lot of progressive movements had run out of useful ideas. And I thought: "This is a good moment for me to step back and take what I've learned over all these years and see how I might incorporate the faith dimension more directly in the work that I do." The other thing was that I had spent the last eight or nine years taking care of my mom. Especially the last couple of years. She died in April of 2000 after a long bout with emphysema. After she died I no longer had to make quite as much money, because Jan and I had been supporting her financially, too. Also, I just suddenly had evenings. I majored in religion 25 years ago in college, and I had thought about going on to seminary then. But that was at the moment when the radical women's movement was really breaking the world open. It was very hard for me. I left college with no language at all to talk about God, because the wound of the hatred of women that I experienced in Christian churches, in Judaism, in the world around me, was just so raw. I started to be able to have language again and to think about some ways I could consider coming into the church when I was able to work in Nicaragua and see in action the theologies of liberation in Christian-based communities. Now I'm in seminary and I have not had so

much fun in years!

Ethan Flad: How did you become involved with starting Seminarians for Peace?

Jan Adams: I'm not a student at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), but I took one look at the situation after September 11th and what it said to me was that people needed to talk with each other just to process what had happened and what was going to happen. The way people could do that talking would be through little local organizing projects in workplaces and schools and wherever people were. Since Rebecca and I already knew how to found an organization and because Starr King is the kind of place that it is, it seemed like we could probably start Seminarians for Peace out of that consciousness and people would want it. And the fact is, people have proved to want it.

Rebecca Gordon: But the faculty is not doing anything! I don't understand why there isn't nationally an organization of divinity school faculty who in a public way are saying: "Stop this!" These are the people who both are supposed to be the religious leaders and are training the religious leaders. So where is the leadership?

Ethan Flad: Is Seminarians for Peace at this point overwhelmingly focused in Berkeley at the GTU?

Rebecca Gordon: Yes. It's not a national movement. I wish it were a national movement, but it's not. Now we're putting easily 30 or 40 hours a week each into *War Times* — we had to make a decision which vehicle was more likely to do something bigger faster and decided it had to be *War Times*. That kicked off last Halloween here in our living room with our friend Bob Wing, the former editor of *ColorLines*, and Max Elbaum, who's a former editor of a publication named *Crossroads* and a long-time leftist activist. We were sitting around and talking about the war and suddenly the idea of doing *War Times* developed among the four of us. We were talking about how during the war against Vietnam there was a national paper that provided people with

Celebrating an

On May 20, 2002, East Timor declared its independence, the first new nation of this millennium

I FIRST VISITED East Timor in 1989. My wife, Brenda, and I were on a trip to the South Pacific following my retirement. As members of Human Rights Watch, we were urged to go to East Timor, which had just been opened to unannounced visitors for the first time since 1975.

In 1974, after hundreds of years as a Portuguese colony, the new government in Portugal pulled out, leaving this tiny nation vulnerable. Indonesia deliberately destabilized its politics and used the ensuing unrest as an excuse to invade East Timor. Henry Kissinger gave them a go-ahead for this internationally illegal occupation. He condoned their use of U.S. weapons, which, by act of Congress, were not to be used except in self defense. In fact, he and President Ford were staying with President Suharto of Indonesia the night before the invasion. Out of a population of 700,000, as many as 200,000 died in the ensuing occupation.

The occupation was brutal. I have visited many places from Russia to South Africa under apartheid and have never seen such severe military control. Soldiers stood on almost every street corner in Dilli, the capital. Military checkpoints were set up every few miles on the main roads. People were arrested, "disappeared" and tortured. Young people in peaceful demonstrations were picked up by the military and some were never heard from again.

Our first visit, in October 1989, was to Bishop Carlos X. Belo, the Roman Catholic bishop of East Timor. Despite a letter of introduction from one of his old friends, he was so frightened that he did not speak for several minutes. He told us he would probably be assassinated any day. Two dozen youths were

information that wasn't available other places — the information really wasn't available. In a way that is less true today, because we have the Web and if you look for international sources of information you can get it.

Jan Adams: But the available information is not contextualized.

Rebecca Gordon: Right. So we decided to pull some other people into this, especially more people of color, and see whether they thought this is such a good idea. Unfortunately, they said, "That's a great idea! Y'all do it!" So we've got a core group now of 12 people who are the organizing committee, and then there are other groupings around the editorial function and around the fundraising function and the distribution function. So there are 500 distributors nationally. And there are about 40 or 50 people in the Bay Area who have something to do with *War Times*. We're now in the process of bringing out the second issue. The first issue went to press in February. We had a big kick-off event

Jan Adams: We went through 75,000 copies in six days and said, "Oh, my God, we've got to reprint!" We printed another 25,000 and we are almost out.

Rebecca Gordon: This is the new technology: Over the years each of us had developed email lists of hundreds — or in the case of Bob Wing — thousands of people. And so we sent out emails describing what we would want to do. And don't you know that before it ever even existed people sent us money and said, "Yes, do this!"

Ethan Flad: Looking back to some of the movements you've been in, what are some of the lessons?

Rebecca Gordon: Check your race stuff. That is lesson number one. It's crucial that a peace movement in the U.S. *not* be built and run by white people. That doesn't mean there isn't a lot of space for white people in a peace movement — and there are more white people than people of color in most places in the country, although not in California. But a peace movement that is not consciously, intentionally anti-racist

will not succeed in this country. Because it won't speak to the people who are the most likely to be skeptical about what the U.S. government is doing — on a tactical level and on a moral level. On the same grounds, I'd say, check your sexism.

Jan Adams: Actually, your queers are very useful, too. [Laughter]

Rebecca Gordon: It's true! We tend to have more disposable time. Especially those of us who weren't part of the lesbian baby boom! If you look at most of the movements that I've been in, whether closeted or openly, there have been large numbers of queer people.

Jan Adams: Yeah. It's a reality that is very hard sometimes for other people among us to deal with. Especially in the churches.

This peace movement is very hard to build in this country, because peace is not in any easy way in the interests of Americans. Being "head empire" is in the interest of the living standard of almost all Americans. And yet, peace is essential to the world. So raising peace as important to the U.S. involves moral leadership, which means that the churches — who at least claim to be in that business — are extraordinarily important.

Rebecca Gordon: I think also we are in a moment when — and you can see it in *Newsweek* and everywhere — people in the U.S. are described at least as experiencing some kind of spiritual hunger. We're fed to the teeth with stuff in this country, but there is something that people are hungry for, and right now the government is feeding it with patriotism. And that desire to be part of something bigger than you are, and that desire to be in connection with humanity and with the holy — the U.S. government is taking that desire and perverting it and turning it into a murderous kind of patriotism. So there is really a place for the spiritual leadership of the church in the peace movement. We have to have the guts to do it. ●

Ethan Flad is editor/producer of The Witness' web site, including the site's "A Globe of Witnesses" project.

independent, but still vulnerable, East Timor

by Paul Moore, Jr

staying at his residence for sanctuary. Brenda and I were followed. When we wished to speak to an official or a priest, we would have to meet outside the city or on the beach. Rooms in the hotel were said to be bugged. We stayed a week and came to love and admire the courage and spirit of the people.

In 1991, a peaceful procession from a church to the cemetery of Santa Cruz commemorating the murder of a youth leader in front of a church, was attacked by soldiers. About 250 young people were killed. A courageous British journalist filmed the massacre. The brutality continued, despite growing international protest, until a new president of Indonesia, B.J. Habibie, authorized a so-called Consultation (a plebiscite) on independence. Eighty percent voted for independence. When the announcement was made on September 4, 1999, the army was so enraged that they laid waste the country, destroying over 70 percent of the buildings and massacring at least a thousand people, if not more, some as they huddled for sanctuary in a church. Finally, U.N. peacekeeping forces stepped in and have been in charge ever since.

This truncated summary of the tragic history of a gallant people cannot do justice to the endless frustrations, the incredible gallantry, the fierce bravery and the deep Christian faith of the people of East Timor. In large part because of the bishop's courageous leadership, the Roman Catholic Church has grown to an estimated 90 percent of the population. Bishop Belo and Jose Ramos Horta, who had been working as an informal ambassador for his people over the years, received the Nobel prize in 1996. I attended the solemn ceremony on a chilly December day in Oslo, remembering the terror abroad in the jungles of East Timor for so many years and praying for peace and freedom for the people.

You can imagine why Brenda and I took up the cause of East Timor after that fear-laden

week in 1989. Arnold Kohen, a journalist by profession, whose wife once lived in East Timor, had spent many years working for the cause. We joined forces and have been trying to do what we could for the people ever since.

We have visited Washington regularly: Congress, White House staff, and the State Department. The lowest moment during these visits was an audience, in 1991, with the Republican-appointed Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East. Two young journalists, Alan Nairn and Amy Goodman, who had witnessed the Santa Cruz massacre, accompa-



nied us. Alan's head was still bandaged from a fractured skull he received while protecting Amy from being beaten by a soldier with a rifle butt. We showed the Secretary a video of the massacre. His comment was, "Well, Bishop, you know people are being killed all over the world."

The Clinton administration was more courteous; I knew Under Secretary of State Talbott and Assistant Secretary Winston Lord, but the administration would not put real pressure on Indonesia because of our commercial interests and the geopolitics of the region. (The only channel deep enough for nuclear submarines between the Indian and Pacific oceans runs past Indonesia.) Now, thank God, we are sending an Ambassador to the independent nation of East Timor, which bodes well for the future.

However, until the oil reserves of the Timor

Sea begin to come in, the economic situation is dire. There is over 80 percent unemployment at the moment. Coffee plantations are the main source of revenue, but this is scarcely enough. Only 50 doctors are there, and few lawyers. The infrastructure is skeletal. We are afraid that once the spotlight of independence is removed, the world will forget about this gallant land.

Last year, with this in mind, I took a delegation from Yale to East Timor, representatives of the medical, nursing, law and forestry schools. We hope to establish long-term assistance in those fields. Secretary General Kofi Annan gave us a luncheon with his staff and we were treated with great courtesy by the U.N. forces when we arrived. Recently, we visited Washington again to urge increased humanitarian aid and assurance of security in case Indonesia attempts to meddle once again in the affairs of East Timor.

I have many vivid memories of East Timor. In 1999, the bishop sponsored a youth pilgrimage to place a statue of the Virgin Mary on the highest peak on the island. We drove out with him and witnessed a beautiful Mass in a jungle valley at sunset. Many thousands of young people were there, in reverent attendance. Halfway up the mountain the next day, one was stabbed to death. What was to be a glorious uplifting moment for the young people, a moment to encourage a peaceful attitude, turned into a stark tragedy. The bishop had to call off the pilgrimage. However, he continued the long weary vocation of working for independence and at the same time trying to keep his beloved young people safe and all his people dedicated to nonviolence.

East Timor has a long way to go, but at last they are free after almost 500 years. Please keep them in your prayers and do all that you can to sustain interest in their welfare. ●

Paul Moore, Jr., is the retired Episcopal Bishop of New York.

WORD AND



A 'People's School' of discipleship

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

IN JANUARY 2001, some 50 activists gathered in retreat just outside of Detroit to imagine a school of discipleship, one which might help in the renewing and rebuilding of a movement for justice and nonviolence in this country. Some of us had, in effect, been talking about this gathering for years. The retreat was a word-of-mouth affair. And frankly, the time had come to put up or shut up. Pull it together or quit the talking.

What a wondrous and odd lot collection of folk we were: Catholic Workers, hip-hop poets, retreat center directors, youth and community organizers, mendicant movement scholars, street actors and preachers, magazine editors and freelance writers, seminarians and professors with a foot on the margin, theologians, spiritual directors, jazz and gospel singers, convicted felons and urban pastors.

There was, of course, newsprint sufficient to paper the walls (pages to fill with brainstorming curricula and structure), but we spent much of our time together not so much in planning a new institution, as in simply telling the stories of how we had come to the circle. All of us had seen our own lives altered and transformed by some process of movement formation which we knew to be the crucial matter. It was really that which we were after. And we all brought diverse pieces to the vision taking shape.

Diverse movement histories — and Bible study

For some of us, myself among them, this gathering marked the resurrection of a project with historical roots in the Finkenwald exper-

iment which Dietrich Bonhoeffer had headed up in the late 1930s at the behest of the Confessing Church in Germany. In our experience that same vision had been reanimated in a sequence of events hatched more recently in this country by William Stringfellow and Daniel Berrigan: an ad hoc series of Bible-study weekends convened specifically to

**We would gather
to help each
other become
radically biblical
and biblically
radical.**

nourish the nonviolent resistance movement of the late 1970s and 1980s. Mentored in that tradition, we tended to reference the whole idea broadly as "the underground seminary."

Others of us came to the idea out of the memory of the Freedom Schools — a tradition which could gather up the alternative high schools of the Northern student movement, the sort of strategic conversations held at the Highlander Center, and the constant host of training sessions required to organize campaigns of direct action in the civil rights struggle.

Some of us came to the circle having been awakened by the fierce and whimsical pedagogies of Christian feminism, including alternative theological reflection offered in places like Grailville, or in the struggles

either for Womenchurch or for ecclesial inclusion of sexual minorities.

And others yet arrived among us walking the path of liberation theology, tutored and tested in the base-community movement where the language of preference is Spanish and the pedagogy entails a risky cycle of action and reflection.

These were not tidy, but overlapping and echoing stories. Ones that resonated, each in their own way, with the biblical narrative that we held in common esteem. Which is to say, we also spent time doing Bible study together. One evening an astonishing session: Prompted by an obscure and appended passage from II Samuel about the grief of Rizpah for her sons publicly impaled and tortured, we found ourselves hearing from one another accounts of grief and death — friends bloodied by Klan bullets dying in someone's arms; death-row inmates befriended in constant visitation, executed by the state before our very eyes, others more distant disappeared and tortured out of sight by death squads; and yet other friends suffering the slower but relentless assaults of cancer. We were suddenly and abruptly a community of grief and solace, a community which had tasted the fire, one which was beset by death and yet lived nevertheless.

Groundwork of the Spirit?

This calls to mind another point, mysterious, crucial, and providential. All of this was convened and set in motion prior to September 11 and its aftermath. And yet throughout these recent months, it has all but seemed the calculated groundwork of the Spirit. I've clung to it personally as a constant source of

Worship and analysis

by Joyce Hollyday

FROM ALL OVER THE U.S. and five other nations, a hundred eager souls converged on Greensboro, North Carolina, in mid-April. With a clear hunger not only to learn from one another, but also to pray together, we launched the first "Word & World" week with Sunday morning worship at Faith Community Church. Then, with uplifted spirits, we took our prayer to the streets.

Sunday afternoon's tour began at Woolworth's, where four freshmen from North Carolina A&T University went to sit on the afternoon of February 1, 1960. While students at other universities were holding discussions, plotting strategies, and conducting nonviolence workshops, these four simply decided that the time was right to take a stand for equal access to lunch counters. Their bold action sparked the student sit-in movement of the 1960s. We paused at this holy ground to offer and take blessing.

How appropriate it was that "Word & World" would launch its inaugural school in this historic city. Our mornings were steeped in stories of courage from the Civil Rights era, the 1979 massacre of marchers by Klan and Nazi groups, and ongoing labor struggles. Pain, poignancy, and prayer drew us together as we moved through each day.

Rivers of music and poetry also flowed around us — jazz, hip hop, spirituals, chants. A brother from El Salvador sang to us from the *Missa Campesina* ("Popular Mass"). Discussion bubbled up from every corner as we wrestled with biblical texts, social analysis, and hope. From early-morning prayer to the last camp song offered around the bonfire at night, energy was high as we celebrated this new expression of education and nurture for radical discipleship.

Tuesday evening we gathered to focus on the topic of "working for the reign of God in a post-September 11 world." Before engaging in a time of animated discussion, we invited individuals directly affected by the tragedies of that day to tell their stories, following each poignant rendering with a healing ritual. Another highlight was Wednesday evening's worship at Genesis Baptist Church. Members of "Word & World" offered gifts of song and poetry to the gathered Greensboro community, and they in turn graced us with their many talents.

A "circle of elders" offered wise counsel and reflection throughout the week. Dr. Vincent Harding brought the experience of his own long history with freedom movements, as well as the faces and voices of some of his colleagues in the Civil Rights struggle through the "Veterans of Hope" videotape project. Our closing communion on Friday night elicited tears of joy and testimonies of gratitude for a most amazing week.

Before the last student headed toward home, those of us on the "Word & World" national steering committee were looking ahead to the next school, in Tucson, Arizona, November 9–16, 2002. We celebrated that Greensboro "worked" — with local history and biblical reflection providing the underpinning for an intensive week of worship and social analysis. Tucson holds its own challenges and treasures: border issues, the historic Sanctuary movement, labor struggles and racism in a different context. If Greensboro is any indication, Tucson — and all the sites to come (we hope there will be many) — promises to be another rich feast. Please consider joining us.

— Joyce Hollyday, who is an Associate Conference Minister for the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, serves on the national steering committee and faculty of "Word & World."



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© Word and World, Greensboro, N.C., 4/02

hope for the future. The proper and precise response required by events.

When the symbols of global power come crashing down; when the military machine is abruptly unleashed and finally unconstrained by the last vestiges of the Vietnam syndrome; when the major media speak as one, hyping an atmosphere of patriotism which silences conscience and brooks no alternative; when legislation (the Patriot Act) creates a new crime of "domestic terrorism" which could readily be applied to civil disobedients; when the same law sanctions unchecked powers of surveillance and investigation (already applied against Denver anti-globalization groups); when borders close and xenophobia runs rampant; when profiling is officially justified against Arab Americans and others; when security becomes the primary function of the state; when prisoners sit in jail uncharged — what then? Seems like just the appropriate time to start a training center for movement renewal, a freedom school of discipleship, an alternative institute for building biblical and social literacy, an educational forum for the renewal of church-as-movement (and renewal of the movement-as-church). I can't help but think that in all these regards the Spirit was ahead of the historical curve.

Resisting 'the seminaries we come from'

The need, of course, had preceded in other ways. In the days of the Stringfellow seminary underground, one of our gatherings was convened around the following summons: The seminaries we come from tend to be parochial in their concerns, and those concerns narrow daily as financial problems make "survival" a deathly institutional preoccupation. We would gather to connect with one another and broaden our vision of ministry. The seminaries we come from tend to follow cults of academia, worshiping professionalism and expertise. We would gather free of idolatrous enslavements. Seminarians and seminaries seem to have forgotten how to read the Bible, reducing it to an intellectual exercise, to a matter of proper critical

technique. We would gather to help each other become radically biblical and biblically radical. In short, the seminaries we come from are more and more swallowed up by the culture. We would gather to come out, to turn again.

How I wish it didn't still ring so true.

Only a few years prior Paulo Freire had introduced the perspectives of popular education and conscientization, and yet even now, 30 years later, the prevailing teaching practices — let's say in seminaries just to stay concrete — still tend to breed dependence rather than empowerment; privilege content over process; and nurture intellectualizing abstraction rather than concrete praxis. In short, they function largely as a form of gate-keeping which fosters (nay, guarantees) the professionalization of the clergy.

Sad to say, the academy of Scripture and theology has long been separated from the sanctuary, but even more so from the street. Ched Myers, one of the January retreat participants, has written: "The social location of most seminaries make them accessible only to educated, middle-class persons, remote from the life of the poor, and insulated from social movements. And most seminary curricula fail to address the whole range of practical skills needed for contemporary ministry: One can learn preaching and the theology of pastoral care, but not community organizing, social analysis, or nonprofit administration."

A moveable, one-week institute

This is the breach into which the January retreatants and a wider circle of ongoing conversants are praying to step. When we moved from roots and storytelling to constructive imagination we began to feature something which would have rigorous substance but travel institutionally light, something which could have a common curricular heart, but be flexible to the needs of place and moment. We conceived of what has since come to be called Word and World: A People's School. The name echoes many things, not the least of which is Karl Barth's

old line about doing theology with the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other.

Think of Word and World as a moveable, one-week institute which is hosted and organized by local/national collaborations. Let it be said and frankly, these are not intended as conferences open mostly to those with the time and money, but intensive schools requiring and presuming commitment. The hope is that they be more than "entry-level" encounters to "taste and see," designed for people already actively engaged in movement work (broadly defined as involvement in some significant way with service, education, advocacy, or organizing for social change). The aim is to help a new generation of such folk go deeper, developing the gifts and skills which movement work demands. Our intention is that each school would be a momentary educational village, heavy on mutuality and shared responsibility. Like any good village, we are seeking out a circle of movement elders, wise ones to anchor us in Spirit and history. We have, likewise, set goals to balance local, regional, and national participation. We want these gatherings to grow the capacity of local movement efforts (which means a baseline of regional participation), but we also want local resources and work to cross-fertilize and nourish efforts elsewhere (which summons the national participants).

To guard such a balance, to ensure that commitment rather than means should predominate, and to factor affirmatively for diversity (youth, women, people of color, poor folk, gays/lesbians and disabled people), we have instituted, with some sense of trepidation, a simple process of application and admission. And for this first round it seems to be working. Those interested produce a personal statement of their history and commitments in faith-based social change work for a joint regional/national committee to consider.

Curriculum: church practices, social practices

The curriculum for these events is being broadly structured around what we are call-

ing "church practices" and "social practices." For example, focal points for nurturing competence include: biblical literacy; political, social and cultural analysis; Jubilee/Sabbath economics; the history and ethics of movements for social change; spirituality of praxis; and building alternative communities, institutions and networks. Pedagogical practices will be ecumenical, contextual, inclusive, applied, and holistic. Almost all of the courses in the first round are being team taught.

The first go-round was in Greensboro, N.C., and picked up strongly on the Freedom School tradition. (See sidebar.) The next is scheduled for Tuscon, Ariz., and will necessarily draw more heavily on the popular education of the base-community movement. We are already taking applications and soliciting support for that one (contact Deborah Lee, W&W Administrative Coordinator, 924 N. 6th Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85705; 520-670-9048, email: ultreya67@hotmail.com). And more are on the horizon — a Philadelphia gathering in the mold of the alternative seminary, others in Detroit or Chicago, and one hopefully in the northwest. It's budding and building as we go.

All this has been done (and perhaps properly so) on a shoestring. A couple of grants have enabled us to put some part-time staff on the project, but the base of the funding has been small and regular gifts from individuals. And the lion's share of the work has been done on a volunteer or in-kind basis. A circle of fine folks have put their heart and soul into making this happen. Let this be a bald-face solicitation. Send money!

Let this also be a candid invitation: Join us, dear friends. The times bode ill, but the Spirit, thank God, is on the move and way ahead of the curve. Take heart. Bring your need, your labor, your gifts. It's happening. ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann, a contributing editor to The Witness, is on the Steering Committee of Word and World. He is director of Graduate Theological Urban Studies for SCUPE in Chicago and lives in Detroit with his wife Jeanie and daughters Lydia and Lucy.

'WINNING BATTLES BUT



An interview with Philip Shabecoff about today's environmental movement

by Colleen O'Connor

As a reporter at *The New York Times* in the 1970s, Philip Shabecoff lobbied to cover the environment before it was even an official "news beat." After nearly 15 years of environmental reporting, he left the paper in 1991 to publish the environmental news daily, *Greenwire*. He's also authored two books on the environment, including *Earth Rising: American Environmentalism in the 21st Century* (Island Press, 2000), a detailed description of the history of the movement and a prescription for its future. In 1990, Shabecoff won the American Library Association's James Madison Award for leadership in expanding freedom of information and the public's right to know. Shabecoff argues in *Earth Rising* that "the chief obstacle to getting the environmental story to the public lies not with environmentalists, but with the media."

Colleen O'Connor: How did you manage to land one of the nation's first jobs covering the environment?

Philip Shabecoff: I've always been interested in the environment — the outdoors, the woods and the camping. I was a Boy Scout. When I came back to America after being away for most of the 1960s as a foreign correspondent, I was assigned to the Washington bureau. I said I wanted to cover the environment. The editors of the *Times* said, "No, it's not important enough, you have to do other things." So I did other things, including covering the White House during the Nixon and Ford administrations. When I came out they said, "What do you want to do now?" I said, "I want to cover the environment." They said, "Okay, okay, but you've got to cover other stuff, too, because the environment isn't important enough." Then Ronald Reagan became president and appointed James Watt to head the Interior Department and Ann Buford to run the Environmental Protection Agency, and they tried dismantling environmental protections, and it became a hot political issue. So my editors said, "Okay, Phil, now you can cover the environment full-time," and I did. I did it for 14 years at the *Times*, but there were a couple of editors who thought I was writing too much about what the economy was doing to the environment and not enough about how environmental regulation was hurting the economy. Which it wasn't, but they thought so, and they were listening to people who thought so. So they took me off the beat, and I quit, and founded *Greenwire*.

Colleen O'Connor: How do you rate media coverage of the environment today as compared to 20 years ago?

Philip Shabecoff: When I started covering the environment in the 1970s there was only a handful of environmental reporters. Now there are a lot of them. The Society of Environmental Journalists has well over a thou-

LOSING THE WAR'

sand members, and the quality of coverage has gotten much better. Unfortunately the quantity has not. Most media are paying less attention to the environment story than ever, for a number of reasons. Environmental news tends to be a downer. Bad things are happening to the environment. It's not infotainment. Advertisers don't really like it. They don't like anything that criticizes industrial and commercial activity. Most media managers still don't understand the environment story, the significance of it, and don't like it and try to stay away from it. In the 1980s environmental journalism was the fastest growing sector in American journalism, but I think that's history.

Colleen O'Connor: Was that growth a reaction to the anti-environmental policies of the Reagan years?

Philip Shabecoff: Exactly. There were also a lot of mega-stories like Chernobyl, Bhopal and the Exxon Valdez. These are front-page stories — drama that the media likes to cover. They don't like to cover some of the long-range stuff. Sometimes when I used to write a story like global warming, my editors would say, "Another story about the end of the world, Shabecoff? You wrote last week about the end of the world."

Colleen O'Connor: What's the nature of the environmental movement today? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Philip Shabecoff: It's a very diverse movement, united by a certain set of principles and values. The major one is that humans are an inextricable part of the entire natural community, but what they are doing is destroying that natural community through their economic activities, population growth and technologies, and that something has to be done about it. So morality is on the environmental movement's side. Environmentalism is widely supported by the American public. Poll after poll shows that two-thirds

of Americans consider themselves environmentalists. The majority say they're willing to sacrifice economic gain for more environmental protection. Another strength of the movement is that it has attracted very dedicated people who have become increasingly professional — in law, in science, in politics and lobbying.

These are formidable strengths, but there are a number of weaknesses. It's not a united movement at all, and groups are frequently at odds. Further, they have not been able to translate the support of the American people into a political gain or even into having the American people change their own destructive patterns of consumption and waste. The reason for this is that they've not reached out to Americans at the local level. I think also that some of the transcendental fire that characterized the early environmental movement has gotten somewhat dimmer over the years.

Colleen O'Connor: What comes to mind when you talk about this is forest activist Julia "Butterfly" Hill. She had that transcendental flame.

Philip Shabecoff: She does, and it certainly hasn't disappeared — the Earth First! movement has an element of that in it. Personally, I think that the radical environmentalists have not accomplished all that much, and may have set up a disaffection for environmentalism among many Americans. But you're right. The people sitting in the tree or chaining themselves to a riverbed that's about to be dammed — that sort of passion is important and seems to be missing in a lot of the environmental movement today.

Colleen O'Connor: I know social sustainability is also important. You believe we can't have economic and environmental sustainability without it.

Philip Shabecoff: One of the failures of the environmental movement is the failure to

recognize that the destruction of natural resources and the systems that support life on earth springs from the same flaws in our society — from social institutions and systems that cause other injustices, particularly racial and economic injustice. The flaws of the economic and political systems that lead to disappearing land and polluted water and skies are ones that keep people in poverty, keep people of color suppressed, and lead to assaults on immigrants. The environmentalists never seem to have understood the relationship between what they are doing and the broader drive for social justice in this country and around the world. The environmental justice movement is mostly people of color, mostly poor people, who address the fact that the worst environmental pollution is heaped upon the poor. Because they are poor, because they are people of color, they are politically neutered. Corporations can get away with doing these things because they know they will not face political or economic reprisals.

Colleen O'Connor: So what happened when the environmental justice people reached out to the mainstream groups?

Philip Shabecoff: The mainstream movement said, "Hey, you're right. We're going to correct this." But essentially the people seeking environmental justice have had to go their own way. There are reasons from both sides why they have not gotten together. But the main failure has been on the part of entrenched environmental groups, not to act upon the fact that social injustice is environmental injustice as well. Unless they start dealing with these basic flaws in our social structure they're not going to be able to achieve their goal of saving our habitat for the future. They're certainly not doing it now. You can see they're losing ground because they have not been able to influence the political and economic structures in this country.

Colleen O'Connor: This seems like a huge, if not impossible, task!

Philip Shabecoff: Until national and community movements are in alliance they're not going to be able to generate any political power. The environmental movement groups have to devote much more resources to politics than they now do. They need to be able to reach the level of political clout that the trade-union movement had at the peak of its power. The way they're going to have to do this is the old-fashioned way, by organizing, by recruiting, training and deploying an army of organizers to send out there. They also need to develop a much better ability to communicate with the public. The environmental groups are not particularly good at getting their message across, except on specific issues, but not in the broader political context of what is happening to the environment.

Now, there's no way the environmental movement as presently constituted can do this. They don't have enough people and organizational skills to do it, and certainly don't have the financial wherewithal to do it. There's a growing number of voices from within and without the movement that environmental groups are going to have to become entrepreneurial.

Colleen O'Connor: You call them "green capitalists." Is there a good example of this?

Philip Shabecoff: There was one major operation. The National Resources Defense Council supported an effort to create the Bronx Community Paper Company in association with a local community group. It looked very promising. They raised lots of money from state, city and federal governments, and a couple big corporations said they were willing to invest. But that fell apart for a number of reasons, including failures within the South Bronx community to agree on this and support it sufficiently. But I think it can be done. Some people think that instead of just more lawyers and lobbyists, the environmental movement is going to need more MBAs and investment bankers in the future. They're going to need to become richer and more powerful than they are now to solve the problems of the 21st century.

Colleen O'Connor: One environmentalist you interviewed says the movement is "winning battles but losing the war." You suggest that lack of cooperation between grassroots organizations and national environmental groups is a fundamental problem.

Philip Shabecoff: My view is that the national groups really need the local organizations to achieve their goals. They have all sorts of skills — political skills, street smarts, organizational skills that the nationals don't have, as well as a lot of knowledge about what is really happening with the environment in the field. They're much more determined to win because they have to — it affects their children, their schools, their homes. They cannot afford to lose, whereas the national environmentalists are often willing to compromise far too much.

Colleen O'Connor: In writing about environmentalism and the world's religions, you quote an article in *The Los Angeles Times* that says: "Churches, temples and synagogues across the land are seizing the environment as a top-priority concern." Is the environmental movement effectively leveraging this interfaith religious movement?

Philip Shabecoff: No, they are not. I think it's a major mistake. I'm not quite sure I understand why. The national environmental groups have become much more institutionalized and professionalized. So far, the idea of religion and spirituality has not assumed any sort of major role within those organizations.

Colleen O'Connor: That's odd, because there's a whole eco-theology movement.

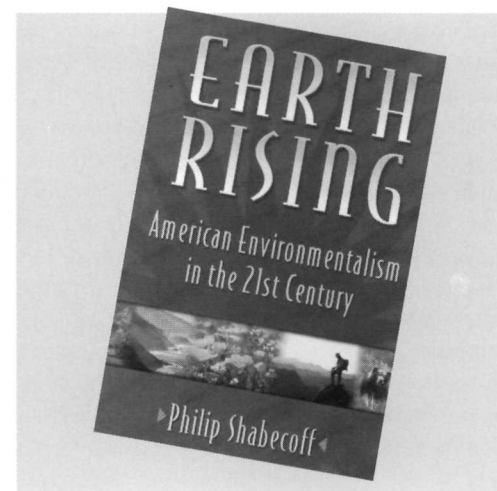
Philip Shabecoff: There is, but that's another part of the general environmental movement, not part of the mainstream national groups. So far the eco-theologists — who have made some very moving and eloquent statements about the responsibility of humanity to the creation — have begun to address the laity on this issue. But we have an administration in Washington now that seems intent on letting the destruction of God's creation go forward without hindrance, and you don't hear the churches speak out or march on Washington or conduct pray-ins or anything.

Colleen O'Connor: How can the environmental movement change our behaviors?

Philip Shabecoff: David Orr, head of environmental studies at Oberlin College, says our environmental problem is a prior failure of mind. Most people are not educated to understand the stakes involved in the degradation of our environment and what needs to be done about it. The media are not giving the American people enough information to educate people and make them want to take positive action. So the environmental movement has a huge task in front of it or else we're going to be in very serious trouble by the end of this century, with environmental conditions so bad they could erode our democratic institutions and our liberties.

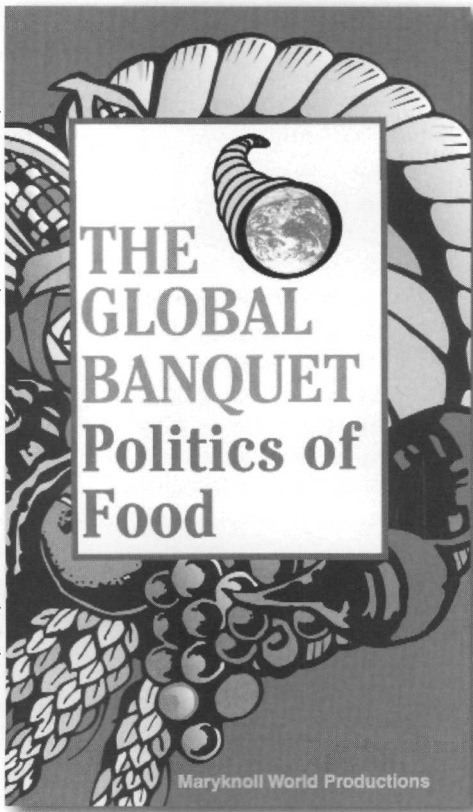
At the moment the environmental community lacks the resources, energy, will and money to do this. But we're talking about the 21st century. Think about the difference between the beginning of the 20th century and the end of the 20th century, and how far we've gotten on the environment. At the beginning it meant saving some public lands and some trees. By the end it had become a mass social movement concerned with all aspects of the degradation of our habitat. Looking at what has happened over the last century, we can hope — and maybe expect — that we will grow and learn and become concerned and strong enough to address these ills. ●

Colleen O'Connor is a freelance writer based in San Francisco, Calif.



Food, agribusiness and ecology

by Jeff Golliher



The Global Banquet: Politics of Food
Maryknoll World Productions,
a documentary by Old Dog Productions, 2001

THE GLOBALIZED FOOD SYSTEM as it exists today is incredibly complex, yet the documentary video “The Global Banquet: Politics of Food” tells the story with unusual clarity, insight and faith, which makes it congregation-friendly. While this is not an overtly religious film, it is sacramental in its meaning and intent because it helps us to remember that food is sacred. The film concludes with a quote from Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

(1941). It appears on the screen long enough to emphasize one of the film’s principal messages: “We can have democracy in this country or we can have great concentrated wealth in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both.” The film extends the meaning of what Brandeis said to the realm of global agribusiness, so viewers will reflect deeply, prayerfully, on how dangerous the precarious state of our contemporary food system really is.

**While this is
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and intent.**

The filmmakers want us to understand the scale on which the struggle for democracy has been overshadowed by unimaginable concentrated wealth along with its political, economic, ethic, spiritual and ecological consequences.

“The Global Banquet” is divided into two parts, each about 25 minutes long. The first part addresses the question, “Who’s Invited?” A farmer from North Dakota who inherited his land — and love for the soil — from his father tells of his efforts to preserve the ecological integrity of the land and to grow healthy crops through organic farming methods. Testifying to the tragedy of high suicide rates among many small farmers throughout the country, he says the problem cannot be traced to honest competition, locally or internationally. Instead, the cause lies squarely on governmental and global-trading agreements

that, in effect, force small farmers, who are regularly blamed for using “traditional” farming methods that do not keep pace with so-called “advances” in biogenetic science, to join the agribusiness monopoly. In other words, “get big or get out.”

The second part of “The Global Banquet” addresses the question, “What’s on the menu?” and explores the impact of global agribusiness. For example, the free-trade global food system is designed to ensure that local food self-sufficiency will become subordinate to a system in which people will have to buy foreign exports. But where will they get the money to buy food? Perhaps by moving off their farms to work in *maquiladoras* owned by garment conglomerates or as migrant workers in fields controlled by Cargill or Monsanto!

Or consider the example of the patenting and control of biogenetically engineered seeds, which is replacing traditional ecological knowledge and the practice of saving the right kinds of seeds by local farmers. They are the people who best know the soil and the characteristics of their ecosystems. The fact of “owning” seeds is troublesome enough, but taking stewardship of the land out of the hands of farmers and placing it, in effect, in the hands of Wall Street is bizarre by any ecological standard. It’s a disaster in the making.

In 1992 environmentalist William Greider wrote a book entitled, *Who Will Tell The People?* “The Global Banquet” takes a very positive step in precisely that direction. ●

The Rev. Canon Jeff Golliher, Ph.D., works in the Office of the Anglican Observer to the United Nations and is Canon for Environmental Justice and Community Development at New York’s Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

PRIME-TIME STATUS

'Gay Liberation' goes global and transgender

by Camille Colatosti

NBC'S HIT THURSDAY NIGHT comedy, *Will & Grace*, features a lovable single gay lawyer who faces conflicts not unlike those of other single men on TV sitcoms. He searches for a partner; he looks for love; he dates with mixed success; and he helps his friends, especially roommate Grace, out of jams.

On Wednesday evenings on ABC, Daman Wayans stars in *My Wife and Kids*. Married, with three children, father Wayans, like Will, experiences his share of TV sitcom adventures and conflicts. Even on this show, featuring a typical middle-class family, gay characters are presented sensitively and without fanfare. When Wayans and his TV wife experience marital trouble, they visit psychiatrist Dr. Steven Michael, a gay counselor, who helps them repair their relationship.

A recent Sunday night movie on NBC focused on gay hate crimes. "The Matthew Shepard Story" (aired in March) told of the 21-year-old gay University of Wyoming student who was beaten to death by two men in 1998. According to entertainment reporter J. Max Robins, "MTV and Showtime are in 'serious discussions' about launching a gay channel." There have also been discussions at HBO, USA Networks and Rainbow Media.

According to Michael Hopkins, an Episcopal priest who is president of Integrity — a 27-year-old Episcopal organization whose purpose is to educate the church about, and work for change on, issues of concern to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, and to represent the Episcopal Church in the lesbian and gay community — enlightened television programming may not mean that the LGBT movement has won all its battles, but the shows are still important.

"The more exposure people have through all kinds of media to gay and lesbian people, the more comfort they will have. Some of the TV portrayals are on the banal side, but that is television. This is a sign of our arrival in American culture, and, in the long run, it is good. Of course, the real work of changing hearts and minds is always one-on-one."

Discrimination and legal rights

According to the Lesbian and Gay Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, the most important work in the LGBT movement right now focuses on two areas: ending discrimination and gaining legal recognition for gay families. Efforts to end discrimination based on sexual orientation concern, among other things, employment and housing issues, as well as treatment in the military. Family issues involve custody and adoption of children and health insurance coverage and survivor benefits for partners.

According to Ken South, a United Church of Christ pastor who works with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Religious Leadership Roundtable, an interfaith association of LGBT organizations and denominations, "The federal government is far behind on gay and lesbian issues. Nearly half of all Fortune 500 companies, thousands of universities, counties and cities, already have same-sex and domestic-partnership benefits and non-discrimination policies that protect people on the basis of sexual orientation."

In fact, as Paul Mazur explains in an article in the January 2002 issue of the *International Journal of Public Administration* entitled, "Developing a Paradigm for Worldwide Gay,

Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Public Policy and Administration," 11 states plus the District of Columbia have passed laws that provide some form of civil rights protection for gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Transgender people are the glaring exception. "Only Minnesota provides comprehensive civil rights protection for transgender individuals. California prohibits discrimination in schools based on transgender status," writes Mazur.

The National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce reports that 22 states include sexual orientation as a protected category for pursuit of hate crimes. As of August 2000, 3,572 companies, colleges, universities, states and local governments were offering health insurance coverage to domestic partners of their employees.

Marriage key to benefits and equity

Key to issues of benefits and equity is the subject of marriage. Thirty states officially prohibit same-sex marriage. In 1996, when the Supreme Court in Hawaii ruled that denial of marriage licenses to same-sex couples is sex discrimination, a conservative religious organization sponsored a statewide ballot initiative to create legislation defining marriage as a union of opposite-sex partners. The legislation passed in 1998 and was followed by the Defense of Marriage Act, federal legislation, signed into law by President Bill Clinton, that defines marriage in a similar way.

In the U.S., only Vermont officially recognizes same-sex partnerships as "civil unions." As Paul Mazur explains, "These civil unions, created in light of a Vermont Supreme Court decision declaring that denial of marriage rights and privileges to

ISN'T ENOUGH



same-sex couples violates the Vermont State Constitution, come with all the privileges and responsibilities of marriage, but without being called marriage.”

Even in Vermont, South notes, there is talk of an effort to repeal the state’s recognition of civil unions. This parallels other regressive ballot initiatives. On Election Day 2000, citizens in Nebraska banned domestic partner benefits and gay marriages. Voters in Nevada defined marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. And Maine voters barely defeated an effort to repeal civil rights protections based on sexual orientation.

To South, “It is imperative that people of faith get out front in these matters and say that the Christian Coalition [the conservative religious group that backs many of these anti-gay ballot initiatives] doesn’t speak for all people of faith or for all Christians.”

Save Dade

This year is the 25th anniversary of singer Anita Bryant’s anti-gay Save Our Children campaign, mounted in response to passage of a Miami-Dade County Commission ordinance making it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in 1977. Bryant, a devout Baptist and a former Miss America, believed that gays, armed with their new-found civil rights, would be out abusing and recruiting children. Three years ago a referendum was held, and the county’s citizens voted to overturn the ordinance. Now, the Christian Coalition has put a referendum on the Dade County September 10, 2002, ballot to ask the public to reinstate the original discriminatory ordinance. Save Dade is a group working to stop the repeal.

“This is a benchmark campaign,” says The National Religious Leadership Roundtable’s South. “On the one hand, people say it’s just one ordinance in one county in the U.S., but the symbolic nature is huge. Really, we see this as a way for us to say where the gay community is 25 years later.”

Enduring symbol: Stonewall

For many, Stonewall marks the beginning of the gay liberation movement. As the website www.stonewallrevisited.com explains, “The word ‘Stonewall’ signifies quite possibly the most important single landmark in the

worldwide struggle for gay rights.” In 1969, patrons of New York’s lower-Manhattan (largely gay-frequented) Stonewall bar fought back when Stonewall was raided one hot summer night by New York City policemen, who came hoping to arrest gay individuals for engaging in then illegal sex acts.

“Eyewitnesses claim that the homosexual patrons’ counter-riot began when one burly Stonewall patron hurled a lidded, metal garbage can filled with empty liquor bottles through a police car window,” the website says. “Ever since that night, Stonewall has been revered as an enduring symbol of the gay militant spark ... which has become a gay/lesbian/bisexual militant conflagration setting America — and the world — aflame with gay rights issues and conflicts.”

Michael Hopkins of Integrity agrees that Stonewall was a defining moment, but also notes that the movement has changed so much since then. “I’m not part of the Stonewall generation,” he explains. “I am a sort of post-1980s person. It is not always easy to articulate how the movement has changed. In some ways it is less of a political movement and more of a self-actualization movement now, and it is sometimes hard to get people motivated to do political activism until it really impinges on them.”

He discusses one of the challenges facing Integrity, the LGBT presence in the Episcopal Church. “Once progress has been made, it is hard to keep people interested in the larger movement. When there is that local comfort level, it is hard to convince them to work for change. In typical American fashion, as soon as I begin to get comfortable I stop caring about larger issues.”

Hopkins continues, “This is not unique to the lesbian and gay movement. Other justice movements have this same experience. Women who have been ordained since 1985 or 1990 weren’t part of the original [ordination] struggle and so don’t have the same motivation as women who were involved to be politically active in today’s struggles because it seems they have already arrived.”

Louie Crew, the founder of Integrity and a member of the Episcopal Church’s Executive Council, sees shifts in Integrity’s organizing efforts. “In the beginning, most chapters met once a month, for Eucharist. We were primar-

ily in a single parish setting. Success meant that more and more Integrity members were becoming involved in their own churches and dioceses and so the need for a regular Eucharist gathering was diminished.”

For Integrity, and for the Episcopal Church, Crew says, the focus right now is on getting authorization for rites of blessing for lesbian and gay relationships. According to Crew, whether people like it or not, this issue “is on the front burner and it will stay there until it passes. Justice issues do not go away. We don’t get past issues until we resolve them.”

“For the record,” Crew adds, “I don’t believe that the gay and lesbian issue is the cutting-edge issue of the 21st century. Those issues are racism, poverty and neglect of children, but God is using gay and lesbian people as the canary in the coal mine. You send a canary into the coal mine to see if there are toxic gases in there. If the canary dies, then you know not to go in. A whole lot of people who are in need of what the church has to give are watching how the church treats gay and lesbian people. If the church abuses gay and lesbian people, people who are divorced, or who have drug addictions or who have any less visible problem will say that there is no reason for me to go there — to go to the church.”

A movement going global

Integrity President Hopkins believes that it is important to help gay and lesbian people around the globe win their struggles for equality and justice. Integrity sponsored a conference on human sexuality in Brazil, and helped found an Integrity organization in Uganda. Hopkins will return to Uganda this month to help activists there with their work.

U.S. LGBT activists are also looking to the successes of Canadian and European organizers. In Canada, explains Paul Mazur, “a groundbreaking Supreme Court decision on October 27, 2001, redefined the word ‘spouse’ so that the parliament of Ontario revised 67 statutes, extending to same-sex couples all of the rights and responsibilities enjoyed by common-law heterosexual couples, including obligations involved in a break-up, adoption procedures, and hospital-visitation rights.”

In Holland, lawmakers approved a bill to

convert the country's registered same-sex partnership into full-fledged marriages, complete with divorce guidelines and wider adoption rights for gays.

In Germany, a law allows gay couples to register marriages officially, have the same tenant and inheritance rights as heterosexual couples and some joint parenting rights for children living in a gay couple's house. Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, France, Sweden, Norway and other European countries have begun to provide domestic partnership benefits.

'Transgender issues are cutting-edge'

Maintaining a global perspective is important to current organizing and so is moving past a simple or clear focus on the heterosexual/homosexual duality, says Virginia Mollenkott, author of the groundbreaking book, *Omnigender: A Trans-religious Approach* (see TW 7-8/01). "The church is still talking in terms of homosexual versus heterosexual and that is very rapidly becoming passé. Transgender issues are cutting-edge."

The reason, says Mollenkott, is that transgender people challenge the idea that a person is either straight or gay, male or female. "The presence of transgender people of every sort — feminine men and masculine women — indicates that this duality is not the way God set things up.

"If we look at same-sex marriage and domestic partnership issues, transgender forces us to shift the ground. It would be impossible to support the concept that marriage should be between a man and a woman because we realize that the definitions of 'man' and 'woman' are unclear. Many scientists don't know how to define them."

Unfortunately, says Mollenkott, a survey in the *Advocate*, a popular magazine of gay and lesbian topics, "showed that 64 percent of readers didn't want to include transgender issues with gay and lesbian issues because it would slow things down. This is very un-Christian and wrong. Acceptance isn't what we should care about. Justice is what we should care about. If just getting a piece of the pie is all we want then we want nothing important."

Witness staff writer *Camille Colatosti* lives in Hamtramck, Mich.

Claiming the blessing

"I will bless you ... so that you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2)

In 1985, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church resolved that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church." Since that time we have been blessed to see great strides taken toward achieving the full inclusion of LGBT people into the Episcopal Church's life, worship and witness. But God is not finished with us yet.

Some of us are blessed to have experienced a church that welcomes us, affirms our ministries, blesses our relationships. Having been so blessed, we are committed to claiming that blessing for those who cannot yet claim it for themselves: those outside the church who do not know that the "Episcopal Church Welcomes You" sign includes them, as well as those inside the church who have not yet received the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the church.

"Claiming The Blessing" is a partnership of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight people and organizations who believe that until all of us are invited everywhere the Reign of God has not yet been realized. We believe that we are called to the work of abolishing prejudice and oppression, promoting wholeness in human relationships, and to healing the rift between sexuality and spirituality in the church. To that end, we commit ourselves to obtaining approval, at the 2003 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, of a liturgical blessing of the faithful, monogamous relationship between two adults.

To achieve these goals we have formed a three-year intentional collaborative partnership. The collaborative includes the three leading LGBT justice organizations in the Episcopal Church (Integrity, Oasis and Beyond Inclusion), several other justice organizations (among them *The Witness*, the Episcopal Women's Caucus, Oasis California, the Bishop's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Ministry in Los Angeles) as well as individual leaders in the Episcopal Church. Our work has three primary program goals:



© Elizabeth Keeton — Gay Pride parade, NYC, 2001

Creation of a clear, definitive, accessible theological statement in support of the liturgical blessing of same-sex relationships. This work will be done by a team of several respected theologians and then disseminated in a number of media formats (website, video, and print) to laity and clergy. We also plan to make available stories of lives being changed,

churches growing and the Spirit moving in progressive, inclusive congregations and in LGBT relationships;

Establishment of a systematic program for educating and encouraging support from General Convention Deputies for legislation to create a liturgy for same-sex blessings, including offering a training conference for Deputies;

Convening a major conference in November 2002, led by prophetic theologians, to educate, train and plan for "Claiming the Blessing" at General Convention 2003 in Minneapolis.

We believe that we have been blessed in order to be a blessing — and we are determined to see the day when the promise of "full and equal claim" is realized for all people. Our passion for this work comes out of our passion for the Gospel, out of our understanding that the liberating work of the Spirit of God will not be done until all people are free and welcome at the banquet table. Won't you join us in "Claiming The Blessing"?

Susan Russell is an Episcopal priest serving in the Diocese of Los Angeles.

THE TIKKUN COMMUNITY

'To mend, repair and transform the world'

by Marianne Arbogast

THIS PAST DECEMBER, more than 700 people gathered in New York for the founding conference of the Tikkun Community, described by co-founder Michael Lerner as "a new national organization of spiritual politics." The weekend meeting included music, dancing, prayer and presentations by speakers ranging from Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman to Pacifica radio host Amy Goodman to writer Naomi Wolf, along with Arthur Waskow, Susannah Heschel, Lerner and others associated with the Jewish Renewal movement articulated in *Tikkun* magazine, which convened the gathering.

Tikkun is a Hebrew word translated as a mandate "to mend, repair and transform the world," and the Tikkun Community founders aspire to nothing less.

"I really got a renewed sense of how much people would love to have a national movement that was talking about love and caring, about the deprivation of meaning and the spiritual crisis generated by the ethos of selfishness and materialism of American society," Lerner wrote in a conference report on the Tikkun website (www.tikkun.org). "And how much they'd love to have a movement that could legitimate our desire to respond to the universe with awe and wonder and could transcend the narrow utilitarian and manipulative frameworks that dominate most politics (including even Green or leftist politics)."

September 11 provided the "immediate impetus" for the creation of the Tikkun community, Lerner said in an interview with *The Witness*.

"What we were seeing coming out of 9/11 was a view of the world that basically saw the alternatives as either supporting American penetration and domination of the world, or going with the forces of Islamic fundamentalism. We wanted to present a third alternative."

The third alternative is one that Lerner has been advocating for many years, as editor of *Tikkun* magazine and author of books including *Jewish Renewal*, *The Politics of Meaning*, and, most recently, *Spirit Matters*. Lerner, who studied under Abraham Heschel, has sought to articulate a vision "that people in spiritual communities and people

who previously didn't even think of themselves as spiritual can buy into."

A religion of secular materialism

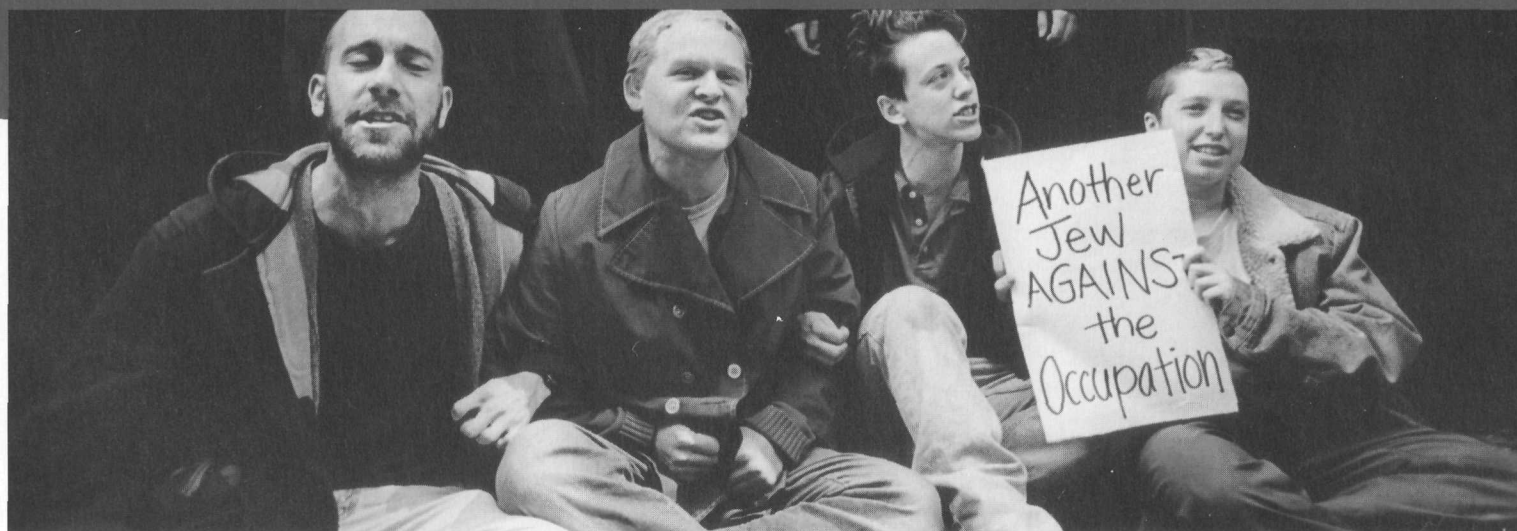
"Our fundamental message is that the central deprivation in people's lives is a spiritual deprivation," Lerner says. "In this society the central thing that's wrong with global capitalism is not that it doesn't deliver enough material goods to people. It's that it values the wrong thing."

In Lerner's worldview, secular materialism is no less a religion than Islamic fundamentalism.

"The world system of which America is the dominant beneficiary is based on a religion. This new religion historically emerged as a rebellion against the misappropriation of religion in the ancient and medieval world as an instrument for domination by ruling elites over everyone else. So this new religion said that there should be no authoritative decisions about what's right and wrong in the public sphere, that moral judgments are purely subjective because what's objective is that which can be verified through sense data. This religion preached a vision of the world in which the highest value was to maximize the individual and his or her self-interest."

While this new religion offered some benefits — the advancement of science, respect for individual rights and liberties, and a realm of privacy — it also brought negative consequences: "It drove moral, spiritual discourse totally out of the public sphere and created a new group of priests and ministers that call themselves 'professionals' — people who profess the dominant religion."

"This made possible the sprouting up of a society in which each individual is pursuing his or her own self-interest without regard for the consequences for anyone else, and the disintegration over time of the bonds of caring and mutual support — whose highest articulation was in the dismantling of welfare programs — a society with the greatest wealth that humanity has ever known, and yet with extremes of poverty that could be eliminated very easily were anyone to use our collective resources for that purpose."



In this analysis, it is a clash of religions that underlies current global conflict.

"When capital globalizes, it brings with it the dominant religion, and its very strong conflict with existing religious systems that preach a different vision of the world. When people say, as Bush said originally, 'This is a crusade,' he was right. Because it's not just that global capital is presenting an economic system — it's presenting a worldview, and it's very much in conflict with traditional religious systems that have a different view of where ethics and spiritual concerns should fit into our lives."

Traditional religions, Lerner says, "emphasize that human beings should be cared for and valued not for what they can produce in the economic marketplace, but because they are fundamentally valuable in and of themselves, because they are part of a particular religious or spiritual community — although you could substitute here the word 'national community' to explain the appeal of nationalism also. The good part is that people are valued simply by virtue of their connection to a particular kind of community. The bad part is that that community is an exclusivist community."

Emancipatory spirituality

If there is one thing the new Tikkun Community is not, that is exclusivist. Although some two-thirds of participants in the found-

ing conference were Jewish, Lerner strongly desires greater diversity.

"I'm certainly hoping that it will shift to not have a Jewish majority," he says. "I'd like to go to every religious community in the country to start with, and try to appeal to people in those communities to become core elements in the Tikkun Community. We're trying to invite Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and others to be part of building it."

The community's "Core Vision and Founding Principles" is a 16-page, densely worded document covering innumerable facets of social reality. Inclusion, says Lerner, is at the heart of the "emancipatory spirituality" he sees as an antidote to the errors of both traditional and secular religion.

"Emancipatory spirituality rejects the ethos of materialism and selfishness of the capitalist order and instead values a spiritual and ethical vision. But with regard to the religious world, it rejects the exclusivism of those communities, and says that people are to be valued not because of their membership in any particular community. Instead it emphasizes the Unity of All Being and the fact that every human being is equally a creation of God, equally embodying the spirit of God, and equally deserving of love and caring, regardless of what their beliefs are, what their particular approach is of connecting to God or connecting to the spiritual realm."

A new bottom line

"If I have to say what's fundamental, I sort of summarize in one sentence what we're about: We want a new bottom line," Lerner says. "We want a new definition of productivity, efficiency and rationality. Because in the contemporary capitalist world, the bottom line is money and power, and the definition of productivity and efficiency is that anybody who maximizes money and power is running an efficient institution, or a social practice is efficient. What we're saying is, no, that definition has to be transformed, so that institutions and social practices are judged efficient, productive and rational not only to the extent that they maximize money and power, but also that they maximize people's capacities to be loving and caring, to be ethically, spiritually and ecologically sensitive, and to be capable of responding to the universe with awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. Schools would be judged failures if they produced great computer experts who didn't give a damn about other human beings."

Does this raise concerns about the separation of church and state?

"I'm not for the state imposing a particular religious approach, but I am in favor of it supporting a particular moral and spiritual consciousness," Lerner says. "I'm just as troubled by the First Amendment fundamentalists as by the right-wing fundamentalists. And the separation of values from the

public sphere is a terrible error.

"In the Jewish world, we've been the first ones to advocate that separation because we've been afraid that the Christians would go right back and start throwing us in the concentration camps or burning us at the stake or whatever. So we wanted a public sphere that had no values in it, because we didn't trust that once they started going with their values, that they wouldn't kill us. But I think we're in a different historical period in which Christians won't kill Jews on these differences. I think we're moving to a point in history where it's possible to have a spiritual, ethical debate in the public sphere which is nonviolent and mutually respectful."

Campaign to End the Occupation

Still, Lerner's own experience demonstrates that such debate is not without risk. In a full-page ad in the Oct. 1, 2001, issue of *The Nation* featuring a photo and letter of support from Cornel West (who collaborated with Lerner on the 1995 book, *Jews and Blacks: A Dialogue on Race, Religion and Culture in America*), *Tikkun* magazine appealed for contributions in the face of death threats to Lerner and financial losses to the magazine because of its stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Tikkun Community organized its first major campaign around that issue, calling for a fast day on March 27, the day before Passover, and taking out ads in *The New York Times* and an Israeli newspaper in support of the Israeli army reservists who are refusing to serve in the West Bank and Gaza. Lerner hopes that the fast day will become an annual event and draw Christian as well as Jewish participation.

"One important component of our campaign is to try to speak to Christians about the reluctance that many Christians have to criticize Israel and Israeli policy," he says. "Christians are absolutely right to feel guilty that their traditions have caused a huge amount of pain and cruelty to the Jewish people.

But the way to rectify that is by internally challenging all of the kinds of teachings in the Christian tradition that have generated anti-Semitism and by taking responsibility for that history, not by giving a blank check to Israeli policy — particularly once you understand that the current Israeli policy is self-destructive and against the best interests of the Jewish people."

Tikkun Community goals

The Tikkun Community founders have established a leadership structure with Lerner serving as the first executive director. A National Advisory Board will select a Council of Spiritual Pathfinders to work with Lerner on a day-to-day basis. In addition to education and organizing around peace for Israel and Palestine, Tikkun leaders have set five other initial goals, which Lerner spells out on their website.

One is building a "network of support" to "create a way for people who are committing themselves to the principles of an Emancipatory Spirituality to be able to learn from and support each other." Practical steps include a yearly week-long gathering and a website forum for members to share their experiences in trying to live out the Tikkun Community vision. The long-term vision includes youth programs, retirement facilities and a match-making service ("to create a network for singles to meet each other while actively combating the false ideology that there is something wrong with being single").

A second is the Planetary Consciousness Project, which includes a Media Education Committee and a Religious Education Committee to help promote awareness of global interconnectedness and the threats from climate change and nationalism. It also includes a Campaign for a New Bottom Line, which will work to enlist support for the Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (a Tikkun proposal that ties renewal of corporate charters to ethical impact assessments).

Thirdly, Tikkun Community members are also asked to volunteer to help conduct and analyze telephone polls which will ask questions designed to elicit people's highest ideals — as opposed to "narrowly shaped questions asked in public opinion polls shaped by the dominant media" which convince people that they are the only ones who want change.

A fourth goal is the creation of a "network of spiritually oriented professionals and business people who support a new bottom line in the world of work." Suggestions for building it include website sharing, monthly telephone conferences with others in the same field, workplace caucuses, and national conferences.

Finally, the community will establish a National Office to coordinate activities and advance its goals.

Some 3,500 people have joined the Tikkun Community to date — meaning, at least, that they offer a financial contribution above and beyond the cost of a *Tikkun* magazine subscription (which all members receive); and, potentially, that they become active in one or more of the Tikkun Community projects. To Lerner, 3,500 people is "minuscule," a small fraction of the numbers he hopes to organize.

"The purpose of the Tikkun Community is to help people recognize each other. If they can recognize each other, they would see that they are much less alone than they thought. The founding conference was an amazing experience of people from many different backgrounds recognizing each other as allies, and that giving people a sense of hope that something could actually be different in the world." ●

The Witness' associate editor, *Marianne Arbogast* lives in Detroit, where she is co-manager of a Catholic Worker soup kitchen.

More information on the Tikkun Community can be found on their website, <www.tikkun.org>.

'A movement-building vocation on poverty'

ON THE LAST TUESDAY IN MARCH, Jim Wallis and other members of Call to Renewal met first with members of the Congressional Poor People's Caucus, then with a group of Republican Senate staffers, and finally with White House staff members involved with welfare reform.

"It was a very bi-partisan day pushing the agenda of poverty," says Wallis, the convener and president of Call to Renewal, a five-year-old effort to link Christians across the political and theological spectrum in anti-poverty advocacy.

In one of the meetings, conversation got bogged down in the language of "poverty reduction" vs. "self-sufficiency," Wallis says. "I looked around at all these faith-based leaders — they're grassroots, on the ground — and they're shaking their heads, you know, what the hell are we talking about, this is a Washington conversation.

"So we try to build common ground. We say, yes, we want self-sufficiency, we want sustenance for people who are poor — not endless subsidy, because that doesn't end poverty, that just maintains poverty at some barely sustainable level. But how do you help welfare families and single moms? You've got to deal with child care and transportation and affordable housing and health care. Is work the way out of this? Yeah, but only if it works — if you work and you're poorer than you were on welfare, something's not working."

Wallis feels that the greatest achievement of Call to Renewal has been "getting the warring factions of the churches together on this issue of poverty. It's the only thing we really can agree on — we disagree on almost everything else. We have been able to bring together a wide spectrum of people. We really do have evangelicals deeply involved — the National Association of Evangelicals is at the table and so is the National Council of Churches. The NCC and the NAE have been like the Crips and the Bloods — they've been literally acting like rival gangs. We joke that when the NCC and the NAE are there we put a Mennonite between them at the table."

This constituency means that Call to Renewal has "access across the political spectrum where just a liberal group wouldn't," Wallis says.

In addition to Call to Renewal's national office in Washington, D.C., about a dozen local Call to Renewal "roundtables" are meeting across the

country. Each works independently on local projects, but also participates in national efforts such as the recent "Pentecost 2002" mobilization on TANF (welfare reform) reauthorization.

"Our job is to help them connect with each other and then connect with the national agenda," Wallis says. "Springfield, Ohio, has a very active Call to Renewal roundtable, and their work has resulted in the construction of a new health clinic for low-income kids, which serves 5,000 kids a year. But they're also putting together a delegation of faith-based leaders to come to our mobilization in May to meet with their Senator on welfare reform."

Call to Renewal intends to expand its efforts to organize local groups, Wallis says.

"Wes Granberg-Michaelson, our board chair, said, 'We've shown that we can convene and inspire, now we have to show that we can organize.' So the task ahead now is state-by-state, community-by-community organizing. I think our vocation is to help local efforts to connect with each other across these chasms in the churches — even within the churches — and then to connect them together for a national agenda. It's a movement-building vocation on poverty."

Movement-building is a necessary component of social change, Wallis contends.

"Do you think we'd have a civil rights law and a voting rights act if there had been no SCLC? There was lots of local activity for years. The local activity, initiative, creativity, leadership — all of that is the prerequisite for social, cultural change. You can't build a national anything if it doesn't have local feet. But at some point, that's got to be networked and connected and lead to some national agendas.

"What a social movement is is that people in Albany, Ga., and Raleigh, N.C., know that their struggles and their hopes and their dreams and their failures — that others are going through it, too, in different places, and they feel connected to that. Mostly what I do, I think, around the country is I help people not to feel alone. It's not just them — there are people like them in other places, and the more we can connect together and support each other and then come together on things we all care about, the more we can accomplish.

"We just saw a big victory on campaign finance

reform. I had lunch with Scott Harshbarger, the head of Common Cause, and Scott is clear that this victory happened because for the first time all the campaign finance organizations who normally fight each other worked together on this. It was like networking the networks. And on poverty we have to do the same thing."

In addition to working with churches, Call to Renewal builds alliances with other groups working toward the same goals.

"There's this new group called the Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, and I think they have the best network around issues like welfare reform," Wallis says. "A lot of welfare moms' groups are in this, a lot of immigrants' rights groups, a lot of living-wage efforts. Just as we have a strategic alliance on welfare reform with the Roman Catholic bishops and with Bread for the World, we're also working with Campaign for Jobs and Income Support. They're organizing poor people's organizations, we're organizing churches and faith-based groups, and we're tracking the debate — and we're going to impact the debate in a way that's allied to each other."

Wallis also met recently with Jim Hightower, who is working with Michael Moore and Molly Ivins on a project called "Rolling Thunder."

"They are going from city to city trying to have a big revival with speakers and music to get a whole new progressive movement going. They want a clear, strong, faith-based component in this, and that's why they want us to come in with them."

Wallis feels that Call to Renewal's Christian identity is helpful to its mission.

"If you go interfaith too quickly, you get all the liberals together who are interfaith. And that's fine, but we've done that, that's not new. Call to Renewal has succeeded where no one else has in getting evangelicals together with liberals and Catholics, and black and white churches. We've got to get our own act together. I think interfaith things are better when each tradition is the best they can be and then makes alliances."

— Marianne Arbogast

More information on Call to Renewal can be found on their website, <www.calltorenewal.com>.

Tea parties for economic democracy

"Ultimately, we must design a corporate system in which all economic rights are equally protected, not only the rights of shareholders," Marjorie Kelly, author of *The Divine Right of Capital*, says in an interview with *Hope* magazine (3-4/02). "We start by changing our minds, by changing our internal pictures of reality that tell us shareholder primacy is normal and legitimate. The way to do that is with pranks. How did the American Revolution start? Not with writing laws, but with folks dressing up like Indians and throwing tea off ships. It started with a prank. Same with the feminist revolution, where women crashed the Miss America pageant, and did a sit-in at *The Ladies' Home Journal*. We need some great pranks. I'd love to see some folks stage a sit-in at *Business Week* or *Fortune*, and refuse to leave until they put out a special issue on economic democracy. Or, in the spirit of Rosa Parks, refusing to sit in the back of the bus. How about employees running John Q. Employee for the board of directors? They could put up bogus campaign posters all over the company and wear sandwichboards at the stockholders meeting: "No Governance Without Representation." It might lead to some interesting conversations with the press: Why can't employees run for the board? Aren't employees part of the corporation? ... At our web site, *DivineRightofCapital.com*, we're hoping to encourage tea parties like these around the country. ... Pranks help us wake up. And they allow us to have fun along the way — which is the only way to do things, when you are a marginalized group fighting a huge entrenched power. You've got to be light-hearted. You need esprit-de-corps, so you don't feel overwhelmed. The aim is to educate people that the problem isn't greedy executives or evil individual corporations like EXXON. The problem is the system



design. The problem is state law that says corporations exist only to maximize gains for shareholders."

Forks can lift a culture

"Europeans, along with many Asians, too, look at agriculture as a culture," David Andrews, executive director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, said in an interview with *U.S. Catholic* (3/02). "They want to keep the landscape, the villages, the farmers on the land; they want to keep a food system that's nutritious, healthy and safe. They invest heavily in the cultures of rural communities.

"I think the way we in the U.S. maintain ties to our rural roots is through country music. The Europeans do it by way of public policy. Here in the U.S. we've valued the music but not the land or the farmers or the villages.

"When people go shopping, they look for the cheapest food. They don't realize that their fork is a powerful lever. Change could

happen if people who eat — and I don't know too many who don't — would think about how the food got to their fork, about whom they bought it from, and about what impact this food has on the environment, on farmers, on their own nutrition. ...

"Europeans are willing to pay up to 20 percent of their income on food because they care more about the food they eat. We pay 9 to 10 percent — of course poorer communities pay a lot more. Actually between our doctor bills, health clubs, and subsidies to large food companies, not to mention the taxpayer bills for environmental cleanup, we pay plenty. If we looked at our fork as a lever that can lift a culture, we'd realize our food choices carry a lot of power."

Nuclear "firewall" crumbling

The Pentagon's nuclear policy review, revealed in March, is a culmination of a movement over the past several years "to

make nuclear weapons more 'usable,' or pertinent, in a world troubled by terrorism, rogue dictators, crumbling Russian might and ascending Chinese power," Raffi Khatchadourian writes in the April 1 issue of *The Nation*. "The review states that countries such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria and Libya should be added to nuclear targeting plans. It also advocates new, smaller nuclear weapons that would be incorporated into conventional war-making tactics. However, these ideas have long been in the making.

"If current policy does not change course, 20 years from now we could experience the following: Rather than pursue the path to total nuclear disarmament, Washington will command a new class of small-scale atomic weapons intended for use on the battlefield. The cold war arsenal will have been substantially reduced, but in case unforeseen threats arise, the deactivated warheads will have gone into storage, rather than been destroyed. Meanwhile, America's remaining cold war atomic weapons will be targeted not just at Russia but also at an array of developing countries. The conceptual firewall currently separating nuclear weapons from conventional ones will have largely crumbled, and the United States will have openly abandoned its unwillingness to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear threats."

Disembodied finance

The largely invisible system of international finance is more destructive than global trade, former Jubilee 2000 coordinator Ann Pettifor said in an interview with Megan Rowling (*In These Times*, 3/18/02).

"You know, the anti-corporate left sometimes gets it wrong," [Pettifor] confides. "They focus on what they can see and touch, which is trade. And because

the international financial regime isn't visible, it isn't attacked. But in reality, it has a much greater power of determination than trade.'

"It's not McDonald's or Nike that rule our world," [Pettifor] argues — 'at least they make things' — but the international giants of the banking world like J.P. Morgan Chase and Citigroup. 'The problem with globalization lies in the liberalization of cash flows, [not] trade flows. Those who own capital operate in a global economy detached from real political, social and environmental relations. And this detachment has not come about accidentally' — it is a result of 'structural imbalances' that have been deliberately constructed by those in power."

Cincinnati reaches racial-profiling agreement

In early April, negotiators in Cincinnati reached a tentative agreement on steps to end racial profiling in the city. The agreement was the result of a year-long collaborative process undertaken as a result of a civil rights lawsuit filed by the Cincinnati Black United Front with the A.C.L.U.

"The proposal includes a court-sanctioned monitor to oversee the agreed-upon changes in police training and patrolling," *The New York Times* reported (4/4/02). "It also provides for a new Citizens Complaint Authority intended to allow the public a more responsive way of filing grievances against police officers. ...

"Mayor Luken requested a Justice Department inquiry into the city's policing methods last April after four days of street protests and violence followed the fatal shooting of a young black man by the police. The Justice Department recommendations for improving police methods eventually became part of the agreement. ...

"The unusual collaborative process, con-

ducted under federal court oversight, was an alternative to full-scale litigation. Negotiators sought a wide spectrum of proposals in interviews and meetings with 3,500 people, including police officers, residents of all ethnic groups and government officials."

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