

WITNESS MAGAZINE



MARTYRDOM

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## on the cover

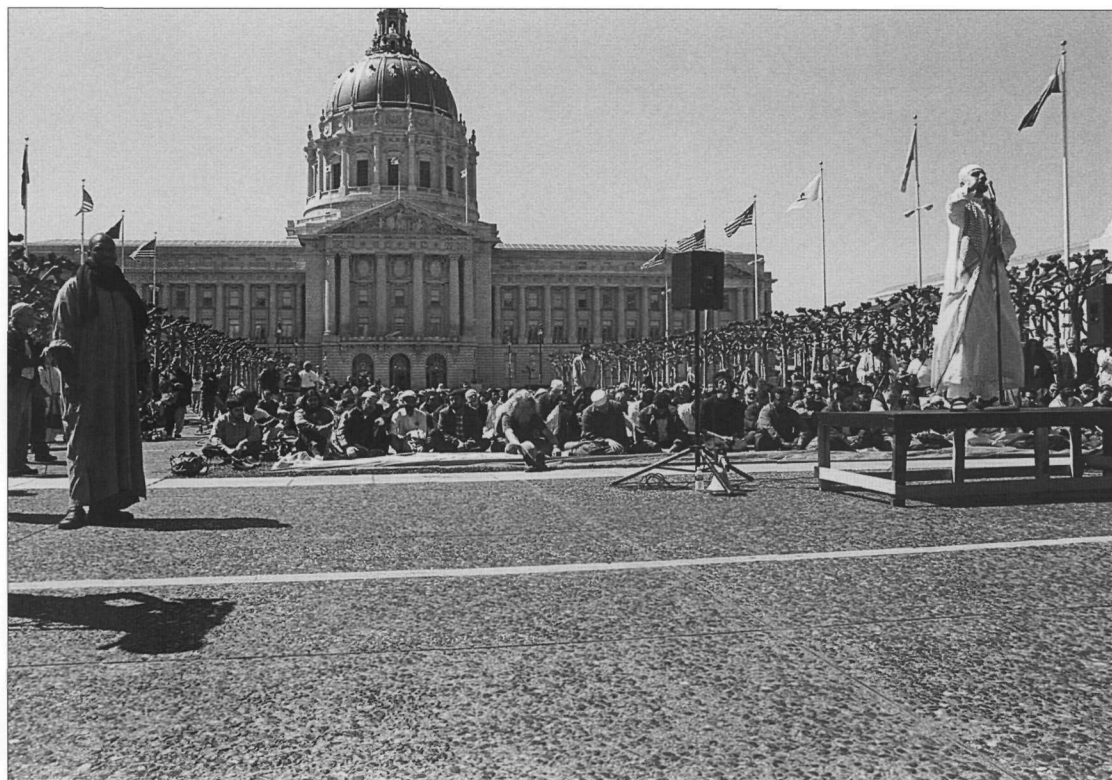
Palestinians carry  
the body of Hani  
Marzouk, 38,  
through the streets  
of Jenin on Sat.,  
Nov. 11, 2000.  
Marzouk died after  
being wounded dur-  
ing a clash with  
Israeli soldiers.

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The Image Works

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On March 28, 2003, shortly after 83 interfaith leaders were arrested at the San Francisco Federal Building, more than 300 religious activists attended an Islamic worship service held in front of San Francisco's City Hall. Shaykh Hamza Yusuf led the call to prayer.

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

# A martyr for peace?

by *Ethan Flad*

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, I believed that the best way for me to help create peace in the Middle East was to die. In Feb. 2001, a few months into the second Intifada, I visited the Gaza Strip. My Palestinian Christian hosts escorted me around the northern section of this small territory, indicating how much worse things had become since my previous visit in 1996. The heady days of the Oslo Peace Process were long gone — by 2001, the conflict had become much more visible and oppressive.

We walked along the main north-south road that runs through Gaza, and came to a roadblock. Less than 200 meters away there was an illegal Israeli Jewish settlement. The roadblock, and another one about 100 meters down the road, had been built by settlers and Israeli soldiers. They did not want Palestinians to go along that road. This effectively shut down commerce within most of Gaza.

Even worse, it prevented Palestinians from getting medical care. My hosts ran the Ahli Arab Hospital, one of only a couple of hospitals in the region. (This is the Anglican-run facility whose church was bombed by Israel in Jan. 2003.) They pointed out that the roadblocks prevented ambulances from getting to the hospital. An injured or sick patient on the other side of the roadblock had to get out of an ambulance, go down a hill to the beach, go along the beach (carried by a donkey, usually), go back up the hill, and then catch another ambulance to get to the hospital. It seemed inane.

We had been standing about 10 meters from the roadblock, and couldn't really see the Israeli settlement. I wanted to have a better look, and to try to get a couple of photos with my cheap camera. So as my hosts kept talking about the situation, I walked over to the roadblock. A couple of them shouted at me, "Don't get too close!" and one yanked me back. "The

settlers will shoot you!" They said the settlers would shoot without warning, as they considered anyone on the road to be hostile.

At that moment, I considered going back to the roadblock and crossing it, with the intention of getting shot and, presumably, killed. It was an emotional reaction, but the idea stayed with me for the next several months. I reasoned to myself: Palestinians and Israelis are dying every day, and the rest of the world doesn't seem to care. Our U.S. government is supporting the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, including the growth of these illegal settlements, and doing little to create a just peace in the region. Perhaps if someone from the U.S. died as an innocent victim, the media and international community would finally take notice. Wouldn't there be an uproar if I were shot, simply for walking along a road, unarmed, in the "Palestinian-controlled" Gaza Strip? Wouldn't that lead to a crackdown on Israel, and to a re-engagement of the peace process? Would I become a martyr for peace?

In popular understanding, a martyr is a person who is put to death or endures great suffering on behalf of a religion, belief or principle. The most controversial interpretation of martyrdom nowadays concerns suicide bombers in the Middle East. This phenomenon began less than three years ago, and has become a central topic of debate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dozens of suicide bombings have killed hundreds of Israelis, mostly civilians. This February I visited Laniado Hospital in Netanya, Israel. The hospital has treated hundreds of victims of suicide bombings, including the infamous attack at the Park Hotel on Passover Seder 2002, killing 31 Israelis. A suicide bombing in late March 2003 injured almost 40 people in a Netanya café. One of the Israeli doctors that spoke to my group blamed the practice of suicide bomb-



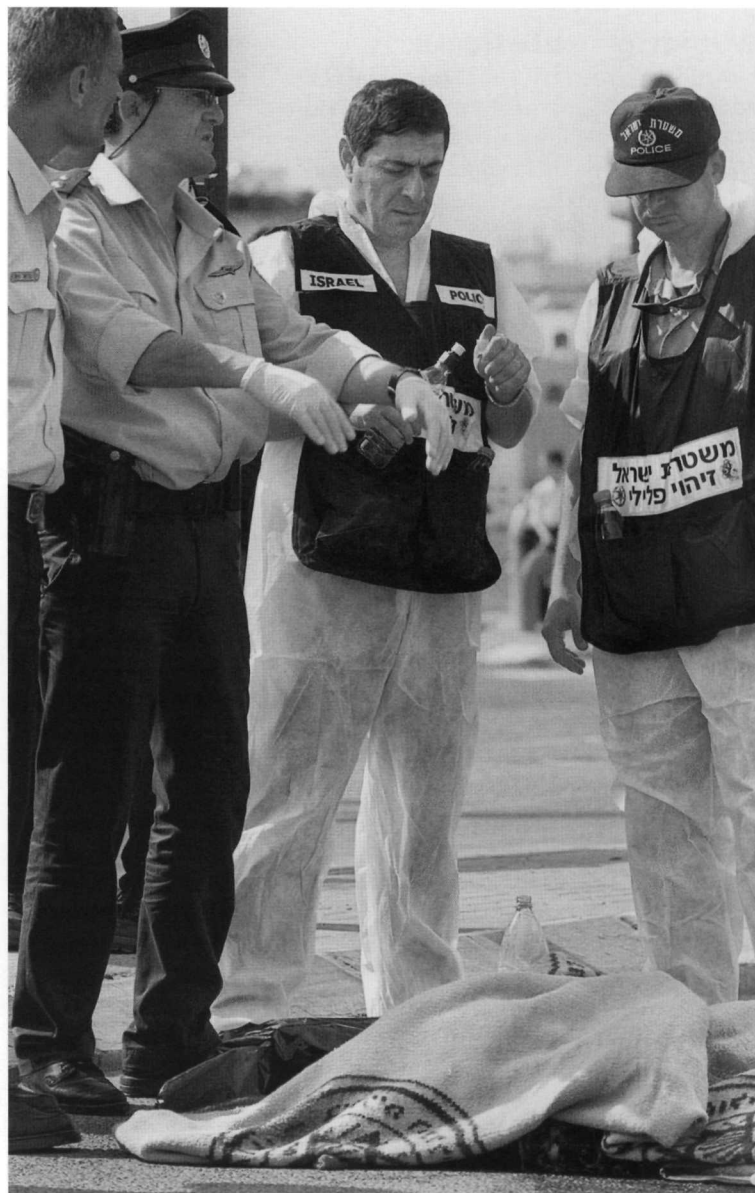
ings on Palestinian parents who “train their children to kill Jews.”

Now this risk has emerged as a new threat in the war in Iraq. An Iraqi suicide bombing just killed four U.S. soldiers, and Iraqi officials have announced that thousands more Iraqis are prepared to become “martyrs,” sacrificing their lives in order to kill their enemies. The Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad has offered to send hundreds of fighters into Iraq to commit “martyrdom operations” in the struggle against the invading forces.

## **I considered going back to the roadblock and crossing it, with the intention of getting shot and, presumably, killed.**

In the midst of war, this issue of *The Witness* considers the concept of martyrdom in a range of ways. Palestinian and Jewish perspectives are highlighted, including perspectives on the biblical story of Samson, whom some call the “first suicide bomber.” We discuss recent religious martyrs, and speak with Christians who are committed to an ethos of self-sacrifice — in Iraq, Palestine/Israel and elsewhere. And we even look at hip-hop culture in the U.S. — a part of my very soul for the past two decades, as my close friends know — since some people hold that music responsible for encouraging our youths to engage in violent, dangerous lifestyles.

As Christians, we are called to uphold the memory of all who die seeking peace. A few weeks ago, U.S. citizen Rachel Corrie was tragically killed by an Israeli bulldozer just a mile or two from the spot in Gaza where I had approached the roadblock two years ago. Corrie did not seek to die, much less to kill others. She stood with countless Palestinians and Israelis who have been steadfastly committed to resisting the occupation through nonviolent direct action, many of whom have died with little notice. I have come to believe that my potential suicide would have done little to create peace in the Middle East, simply adding one more statistic to an endless death count. But I am emboldened by the witness of these martyrs, and call on all of us to recommit ourselves to choosing nonviolence and life in the midst of war and death. ●



*Israeli police officers stand over the body of a Palestinian suicide bomber who blew himself up near a bus stop in Jerusalem March 27, 2001.*

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**T**HIS ISSUE OF *THE WITNESS* is my first as Editor. My colleague Wes Todd, our new Publisher, and I are honored to take the staff leadership at the Episcopal Church Publishing Company (ECPC) at this critical point in our organization's history. For more than 85 years ECPC has provided a prophetic Christian perspective on liberation and justice, and we will

seek to continue to offer that needed progressive voice. Now, more than ever, we need alternative media like *The Witness* to provide in-depth analysis on the issues of the day.

We are especially grateful to our former Editor/Publisher, Julie A. Wortman, who faithfully served ECPC for more than 12 years and led our staff for the past four years

as Editor. In the footsteps of *The Witness*' long legacy of prophetic leaders, including Julie Wortman, Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, Barbara Harris, Mary Lou Suhor, Bob DeWitt, Bill Spofford, and founder Irving Peake Johnson, we will continue to serve as a “public theology” forum, in print and online, for the church and the world. ●

## Missing solutions

I read with interest your uncritical and admiring interview with Fr. Michael Prior [TW, 3-4/03]. I got his abhorrence of Zionism and Zionists, his avoidance of Middle East history, and his displeasure with the text of the Hebrew Bible, but I missed any suggested solutions. Does he favor pushing all Israeli Jews into the sea, or merely shipping them anywhere else in the next available container ships?

Steven A. Bookshester  
Annapolis, Md.

## AIDS witness needed

I am chair of our Diocesan AIDS Task Force. We are having our annual Diocesan Convention at the end of the month. The DATF will have a table at the convention. I want to have copies of the Jan./Feb. 2003 issue for handouts.

This is a diocese that NEEDS to have *The Witness* coming to as many households as possible.

We have a resolution which is gaining strength, based on the UN rep's comments to the House of Bishops last fall. A member of our AIDS Task Force asked his parish to sign on as a co-sponsor to it. The rector never allowed it to get to the table in a vestry meeting because Integrity had signed on to it. That should give you an illustration

of the kind of uphill battle one has to deal with in most of the churches in this diocese. My church, the Cathedral of the Advent, has never signed on to any such AIDS-related resolution. God bless the witness of *The Witness*.

Frank Romanowicz  
Birmingham, Ala.

## Slavery hurt poor whites

In Jennifer Harvey's interesting article, "Whites and reparations," [TW, 12/02], appears the idea that whites gained from slavery because, she writes, slavery provided whites with "the freedom to access a job as a paid laborer." In fact, quite the opposite was true. Slave labor effectively put the damper on free labor because it provided cheap labor to industrialists who therefore did not need to go in the free market to obtain labor. For example, the Tredegar Works, the large industrial complex in Richmond, Va., which was the largest such works in the South before the war, actually owned quite a number of slaves. According to Larry Daniel and Riley Gunter's *Confederate Cannon Foundries*: "By November 1864, the free labor force had been cut by more than fifty percent, while the slave labor population had more than doubled. Ed Taylor, a slave belonging to [Tredegar owner Joseph]

Anderson was highly skilled in hammering out the iron bands for Parrott and Brooke guns." Tredegar was typical in that most Southern manufacturing concerns used great amounts of slave labor to reduce labor costs. As well, public works projects were commonly performed by slave labor hired from local planters rather than by free white laborers competing in an open market.

What this meant was that effectively laboring class whites in the South until the end of the Civil War were all too often unable to compete for skilled jobs, thus forcing them to remain working poverty level farms unless they moved to free territories. At the same time, immigration of laborers from Europe, who largely sought factory and mill jobs, were at much lower rates in the south, where they would have had to compete with slave labor, than in the North where such jobs were readily available. For example, according to Dean Mahin's *The Blessed Place of Freedom, Europeans in Civil War America*, "The vast majority of German immigrants — 1,229,144 persons — lived in the Northern states, with only 71,992 in future Confederate states."

The result was that chances for members of the poor white working class in the South to improve their status was greatly limited by the system of slavery which really benefited only a small exploiting class. As Southern Hinton Rowan Helper wrote in his *The Impending Crisis of the South* in 1857, "illiterate poor whites [are] made poor and ignorant by the system of slavery."

Philip Katcher  
Devon, Pa.

## A grace-filled ripple effect

Today I received in the mail a photocopy of your "Editorial Notes" from the April 2002 issue of *The Witness* — "Women confronting violence." I am so pleased to read it. It is



## Trailblazing civil rights activist Walter Dennis dies

Walter Decoster Dennis, retired Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, died March 30 in Hampton, Va., after a long illness. He was 70 years old. Priest and lawyer, well-known and well-loved, Dennis was deeply involved in civil rights and race relations. His lifelong commitment to justice and peace ranged from giving aid to the freedom riders to helping found organizations whose goals were the pursuit of equality, including the Union of Black Episcopalians and the Guild of St. Ives, which provides legal assistance with a "pastoral dimension" to Episcopalians in canon or civil law.

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *The Witness* magazine and related website 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.

Manuscripts: Writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

beautiful. I was completely unaware of the editorial and issue because I am no longer at my Milford address and have been unable to afford a subscription — both of those being the result of a divorce. (Healing and recovery has led to the truth-telling and “radical reformation” you mention in your editorial.)

And the odd thing about finding out about your column and the issue devoted to women and violence — besides that it is eight months after the fact — is that it came from my former therapist. I believe she may have begun a subscription to *The Witness* when I shared with her my initial letter to you. However it has happened, I am grateful to you and all at *The Witness* for breaking the silence, and I can't wait to read the April, 2002 issue.

There has been a grace-filled ripple effect from your “Recovering from human evil” issue [12/99] and my response letter. Thank you for being faithful in ways I haven't experienced anywhere else. You are truly witnessing, breaking the silence. And, as you wrote, it is “earth-shattering.”

Mary Eldridge  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

## Preemptive war

Our being “first in war and first in peace” does not include preemptive war, lest we be like Hitler's Germany which launched a preemptive war against Russia, thus spreading World War II and labeling Hitler a war criminal. The World War II Japanese preemptive strike against Pearl Harbor “will live in infamy.” Preemptive war smacks of “gangland ethics.” Lest President Bush *et al.* end up in history classified with war criminals, the U.S. must seek peace guaranteed by the United Nations.

John Julian Hancock  
Los Angeles, Calif.

## Committed focus

It is with joy and respect that I renew my subscription to *The Witness* magazine and express my confidence that the Spirit is speaking to the churches in the forthright words and committed focus of the magazine on the dynamic action of faithful people to bring liberation and reconciliation to a world full of hostility, exploitation, divisiveness

and imprisonment of all kinds. Keep it up!

Holly Antolini  
Cushing, Maine

## Corrections

The email address for Roy Nielsen, who wrote the commentary on Sudan for the March/April issue of *The Witness*, was given incorrectly. Nielsen's email address is: [wr.nielsen@worldnet.att.net](mailto:wr.nielsen@worldnet.att.net).

Also, our Jan./Feb. story on the restructuring of the national church's ethnic ministry unit quoted a statement that “nobody applied for the director's position.” Ernesto Obregon alerted us that he had himself applied, so the information was mistaken.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Order of Jonathan Daniels

An Episcopal religious community-in-canonical-formation of brothers and sisters; single, partnered and married; either living-in-community or living independently; striving for justice and peace among all people. Contact: Order of Jonathan Daniels, St. Brigit's Hallow, 94 Chatham St., Chatham, NJ 07928.

### Order of Christian Workers

Welcome to our life/work in community, homelessness, immigrants, AIDS, Recovery, housing, spirituality, including “To Follow the Christ” poster, books, etc. [www.orderofchristianworkers.org](http://www.orderofchristianworkers.org).

### Living Prayer, Living Justice

“LIVING PRAYER, LIVING JUSTICE: A NATIVE APPROACH TO INTEGRATING SPIRIT AND BODY” is the title of a conference to be led by The Rt. Rev. Carol Gallagher, Bishop Suffragan of Southern Virginia. The conference will be held at Adelynrood Conference Center July 18–20, 2003, sponsored by the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross. For registration information call Tish Brown at 410-563-1231 or [erv.brown@earthlink.net](mailto:erv.brown@earthlink.net). Or write: Adelynrood, 46 Elm Street, Byfield, MA 01922. Or email: [KateNoury@Adelynrood.org](mailto:KateNoury@Adelynrood.org).

[www.thewitness.org](http://www.thewitness.org)

## A Globe of Witnesses

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progressive,

critical voices

from around

the world.



# As we went to press...

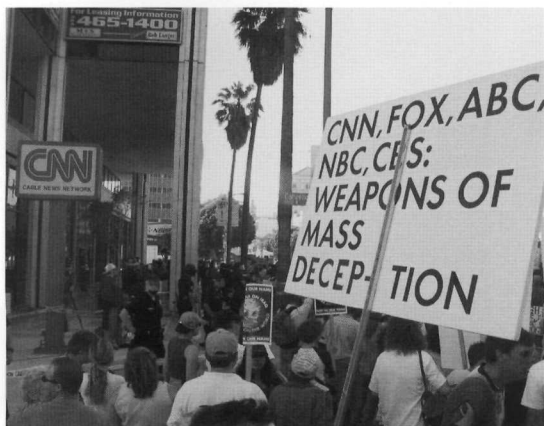
This news digest was prepared from news and wire reports by *Witness* news editor, Pat McCaughan.

## Two COE bishops call war 'justified'; Palestinian bishop calls allies 'Christless Christians'

While two Church of England (COE) bishops broke ranks with the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglicans, calling the attack on Iraq morally and legally justified, the Bishop of Jerusalem characterized the allies and their supporters "Christless Christians." In an interview with *The Church of England Newspaper*, John Oliver, Bishop of Hereford, said Saddam Hussein had been responsible for the deaths of up to a million of his own people. "Casualties in a quick-strike war are likely to be something like one-tenth of that figure. If he is let off the hook again the next 12 years may well see the death of half a million people at least." But Bishop of Jerusalem Riah Abu-el-Assal called the British and Americans "aggressors" in the war and noted that Israel would be the main beneficiary of the conflict in securing aid from America as part of the war budget. The allies will bear the responsibility of the loss of innocent lives, claimed Abu-el-Assal. "I continue to believe that whoever thinks that they can bring about a new world order with the power of the gun will be defeated," he said.

## 'Peace pins' available through EDS

The Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) in Cambridge, Mass. has come up with a helpful way to remember the Iraqi people, by wearing the name of an Iraqi child. At press time, the seminary had received requests from around the world for nearly 33,000 "peace pins." A white dove is featured on the light blue pins, along with an olive branch and the name and age of an Iraqi child. To order, contact Nancy Davidge, 617.868.3450 x302, fax 617.864.5385, email: [ndavidge@episdivschool.edu](mailto:ndavidge@episdivschool.edu).



## What's happening with the war? It depends on who's watching

All the news that's fit to watch depends on the audience, and surveys show that an increasing number of Americans believe the war in Iraq is a just war, while most of the world's Arabs and Muslims see it as a war of aggression. "The difference in coverage between the U.S. and the rest of the world helped contribute to the situation that we're in now," says Kim Spencer, president of WorldLink TV, a U.S. satellite channel devoted to airing foreign news. "Americans have been unable to see how they're perceived." Media watchers say the European press has tended to be more balanced than the U.S. media, in part because Europe is closer to the Muslim world. "There are really two stories unfolding here, one is the war and its progress and the second one is the progress of world opinion," says Tom Patterson of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. "That second dimension is there in the American press, but it's clearly way underreported." For instance, U.S. media outlets don't devote many resources to covering in-depth the growing anti-American sentiment — even among American allies — or its implications for the future, says Professor Patterson. (source: *Christian Science Monitor*)

## New Kenyan anti-AIDS campaign seeks increased role for churches

Kenya's government, in announcing an aggressive new campaign against AIDS, is seeking to increase collaboration with church organizations to fight the spread of the disease. A main component of the campaign will be to "scale up" HIV/AIDS programs that various churches offer, a government official said. For example, the Archdiocese of Nairobi will receive about \$24,000 for its AIDS programs. Government and church officials said they believe the collaboration is essential to the program's success due to the churches' extensive networks. "We realize that they have got their own policies for their church members and training programs for their own staff people. We wanted to bring these people together so that we can learn from each other and inspire one another," said Micah Kisoo of the National AIDS Control Council, the government body that coordinates national HIV/AIDS initiatives.

## Put churches before gold, Romanian clerics urge

Romanian church leaders have protested against plans to bulldoze eight churches and nine cemeteries to make way for Europe's biggest-ever opencast gold-mine. "We don't agree to this act of destruction and will insist our demands are met," said Andrei Andreicut, Romanian Orthodox Archbishop of Alba Iulia. The plans for mining at Rosia Montana in Transylvania's Apuseni Mountains have already raised a storm of protest from local residents, environmental groups and historians. The project was put forward by a Canadian-Romanian joint venture called Gold Corporation.

## Indigenous Anglicans reject agreement to settle school abuse claims

A group of Anglican indigenous people in Canada has rejected an agreement by the church and the federal government to settle abuse claims filed by former students of schools for indigenous children because the agreement does not cover claims of emotional or cultural abuse. Under the accord, signed in March 2003, the Anglican Church of Canada and the government will share the cost of compensating indigenous students who suffered sexual and physical abuse in residential schools operated by the church on behalf of the government from 1820 to 1969.



# Episcopal Urban Caucus plans General Convention strategy

by *Ethan Flad*

"We are not where we want to be, further than we used to be, but as always, in jeopardy of losing it all," Ed Rodman warned 200 progressives attending the Episcopal Urban Caucus (EUC) at its national assembly in late February.



*Paul Moore lays hands on Susan Russell, director of the Claiming the Blessing initiative.*

War was on the horizon and the memory of the Republican Party's capture of the U.S. Congress was fresh. This quickly shifting political landscape has put the social activist community on notice: A quarter-century of progress is in danger of being reversed. With the Episcopal Church's General Convention only a few months away, a re-energized EUC constituency arrived in Chicago worried that the rightward move in the government could soon be reflected in the church too.

Assembly organizers chose the conference title "Church Growth or Discipleship: Whither the Episcopal Church?" as a

method of exploring this concern. The theme drew on a program called "20/20," a controversial proposal that has challenged the denomination to double its membership by the year 2020. Since many previous evangelism initiatives have been sponsored by political conservatives, social activists have historically kept a wary distance. In a keynote address, Ian Douglas, professor of World Mission & Global Christianity at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., argued that this is a false dichotomy. "I have a problem with the binary, oppositional placement of being either for more bodies in the pews or for human rights and social justice," declared Douglas.

Two pieces of the assembly sparked extra energy. Paul Moore, retired bishop of New York, appeared as the banquet speaker, just one month after being diagnosed with inoperable lung and brain cancer. Moore is widely considered to be one of the church's most prophetic witnesses to the struggles for racial, economic and sexual justice over the past half-century, and his reflections on ministry and justice provoked a response of tears and laughter from the audience. "It's the cracked ones who let the light through," Moore said more than once, enthusing, "The thing about this stuff is it's a lot of fun when you're doing it!"

One of the founders of the EUC, as well as several earlier civil-rights-era church groups, Moore focused on the pressing need for the justice community to build a revitalized, stronger movement. A World War II veteran, he expressed optimism that the current political climate could actually be useful: "I think this war may be a time when we can impact others." To encourage this, Moore called each person to think of the moment when they were transformed into a social justice activist. "I think we have to understand why we are here. How do we get more people who are as weird as we are, or as sane as we are, or as committed to the word made flesh as us? How can each of us touch someone else?" His opinions about building movements also looked forward to the upcoming General Convention. With several

fellow members of the episcopacy in the audience, Moore challenged them: "May I say to my brother bishops: Get there [to General Convention] the night before [it starts] and organize. It doesn't take very many of you to be effective!" He received a standing ovation.

It was indeed the upcoming General Convention that was on everyone's mind. In an EUC strategy session, Convention veterans Diane Pollard and Byron Rushing took pains to explain the confusing and occasionally tedious aspects of what will happen in Minneapolis, noting that seemingly uninteresting topics are often the most important ones. "Please pay lots of attention to the budget!" warned Pollard. More than 30 "hot topics" were raised by workshop participants as areas of concern. On the final morning of the assembly, some of these issues — addressing diverse concerns like living-wage legislation, prison building, and the war — emerged as resolutions adopted by the 23rd EUC assembly.

## For More Information

Text of EUC assembly keynote speeches are posted online at: [www.thewitness.org/agw](http://www.thewitness.org/agw) and [www.episcopalurbancaucus.org](http://www.episcopalurbancaucus.org). Additional coverage at [www.everyvoice.net](http://www.everyvoice.net)

## Remembering Linda Strohmer

by *Kevin P.J. Coffey*

About 80 friends from the west, north, east and south gathered at St James' Episcopal Church in Great Barrington, Mass., on Saturday, March 22, for one of many memorial services for Linda Lucille Strohmer, who died suddenly from a heart attack on Friday, March 14, 2003.

Born Oct 31, 1945 in Brazil, Ind., Strohmer was the daughter of William and Wanita Hamm Shearer. In 1966, she graduated Indiana University, cum laude, with a B.A. and from The General Theological Seminary, cum laude, with an M.Div. in 1984.

## LOUIE'S INDEX

The number of bishops of color who have been consecrated during Frank T. Griswold's term as Presiding Bishop: 4 (Michael Curry, Bishop of N.C., Wendell Gibbs, Bishop of Mich., Gayle Harris, Suffragan Bishop of Mass., and Carol Gallagher, Suffragan Bishop of Southern Va.)

The number of those consecrations which Presiding Bishop Griswold has attended:  
0 (Thanks to Kwasi Thornell for calling this to my attention.)

Number of Anglican provinces in the worldwide Anglican Communion: 38

Number of domestic (U.S.) dioceses in the Anglican province of the Episcopal Church, USA (ECUSA): 100

Number of non-domestic dioceses in ECUSA: 9 (Colombia, Central Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Europe, Haiti, Honduras, Litoral Ecuador, Taiwan, Virgin Islands)

Number of non-domestic dioceses applying for re-admission to ECUSA: 2 (Puerto Rico and Venezuela)

Number of overseas Anglican provinces with which ECUSA currently hold covenants:  
5 (Brazil, Central America, Liberia, Mexico and the Philippines. See <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/agr/covenant.html> for details.)

Number of dioceses in the Anglican Province of Mexico: 5

Number of Mexican diocesan bishops who have ended ministry in that Anglican province in the past six months: 4 (Samuel Espinoza-Venegas, Primate and Bishop of Western Mexico and German Martinez-Marquez, Bishop of Northern Mexico, are both under investigation for allegedly stealing more than \$1 million US dollars from the church, some of it gifts from ECUSA to honor our covenant with the church in Mexico. Sergio Carranza-Gomez left the Diocese of Mexico to become Assistant Bishop of Los Angeles. Martiniano Garcia-Montiel has left his position as Bishop of Cuernavaca, and is serving as the interim primate of the province during this transition period.)

Number of U.S. Presidents since the declaration of the republic: 43

Number of U.S. Presidents who have been Episcopalians: 11 (source: [www.adherents.com](http://www.adherents.com))

Number of Episcopalians in the 108th U.S. Congress:  
45 (10 in the Senate, 35 in the House of Representatives)

Number of grandsons of U.S. presidents in the current Episcopal House of Bishops:  
1 (Clifton Daniel, Bishop of East Carolina, grandson of Harry S. Truman)

Number of Episcopal bishops who served as generals in the Army of the Confederacy:  
1 (General Leonidas Polk, Bishop of Louisiana, 1841-1864)

Q: Did the Episcopal Church split during the Civil War?

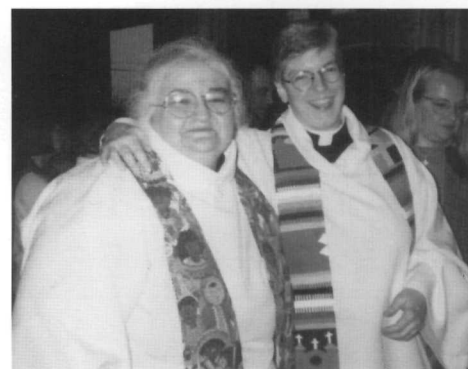
A: Officially "no." Unofficially "yes." The dioceses of the Confederacy met four times during the war, the last two of them as The General Council of The Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States of America. They never officially withdrew from the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

### CORRECTION:

In the March/April installment of Louie's Index, Oklahoma was identified as a domestic diocese which reports deploying no women clergy. This information was taken from data officially collected by Executive Council. However, several women clergy are deployed around the diocese.

Witness contributing editor Louie Crew, founder of Integrity and a longtime Episcopal Church leader (he currently sits on the Episcopal Church's Executive Council and the Diocese of Newark's deputation to General Convention 2003) is a well-known collector and disseminator of statistics and little-known facts about the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion. His website is [www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew](http://www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew).

UPDATE continued from page 9



Linda Strohmiere (left) with Ellen Barrett at Strohmiere's farewell service from the Bergen Episcopal Area Ministry in the Diocese of Newark

After her ordination to the priesthood, she served parishes in the Dioceses of Bethlehem, New York and Olympia before being appointed by then Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning to be National Evangelism Coordinator. She also served several years on the board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *The Witness*.

Strohmiere later served congregations in the Dioceses of Newark and New Jersey. Since the 1st of this year she had been serving as cook with Life Needs Co-op, a "life-sharing" extended family setting for individuals with disabilities, where her daughter, Margaret "Maggie" Strohmiere, has lived for many years.

A funeral service was held for the members of Maggie Strohmiere's household in Great Barrington on Monday, March 17. The Eucharistic prayer used at the memorial service was one Strohmiere had crafted while serving on the drafting panel working on the supplemental eucharistic texts for the Standing Liturgical Committee. Following the memorial service, Strohmiere's family and friends returned to Maggie Strohmiere's home for both a repast and, honoring Strohmiere's Native American heritage, a potlatch — a term, corrupted from a Nootka Indian word for "gift," for a ceremonial custom among some Indian tribes of distributing an individual's property among friends and neighbors.

Bill Lewellis, communication minister and editor for the Diocese of Bethlehem, said, "Linda brought to the world a love of theater

# Commentaries

## Occupation is our story, too

by Winnie Varghese

**M**Y OWN FILTER ON THE WORLD as a South Asian American is through the lens of colonialism. Israel looks like colonialism from my perspective. Here in the West it can be more difficult to see what is fundamentally flawed with that system. It is the founding myth of our own country: an unoccupied land that can be occupied by good — for us, Christian — hardworking people. We now acknowledge that as a destructive myth. We know the cost to native peoples, and to people of color from around the world who were brought here to prop up that myth for a privileged few.



Ethan Ford

Witness contributing editors Winnie Varghese (left), Samia Khoury (second from right) and Michael Battle (right) flank Sabeel Liberation Theology Center director Naim Ateek at the Sabeel office in East Jerusalem.

In Israel, the “empty land” was not empty. It is in this century that people have fled, and they are still alive to tell the story. In early February, an interfaith peace-building delegation to the Middle East sat in stunned silence as Palestinian priest Naim Ateek told us of his family’s displacement and his liberation theology. “It is a story of land,” he reminded us. It was like our story in the U.S. and like South Africa. Who has a right to work the land? To own it? To travel it safely? Or better yet, who does not? Ateek writes, “The land belongs to God; we must share it.”

We met a lot of gracious Israeli Jews, good people, some of whom didn’t know there were still Palestinian refugee camps or displaced peoples. They just wanted to live peacefully. They were themselves Holocaust survivors or descendants of survivors. But the violence of one generation does not excuse the violence of another one, as many Israeli activists we met reminded us.

I believe our discomfort and our quickness to hide behind the fear of being perceived as anti-Jewish is in part our desire to be good. Not good to Jews, but to deny our own privilege in living here, whether we claim a 300-year legacy in this country or a recent immigration story.

The Israeli story is one of fleeing persecution, often at the hands of the church, throughout most of Europe. We know that story. It is the immigrant story around the world. But

and community. Her singing was inspiring and vibrant, and her laughter was hearty and infectious. People sought Linda out for counsel, understanding and warmth. She will be greatly missed by her daughter and by her many friends.” Bishop Stephen Charleston, president and dean of Episcopal Divinity School, described Strohmier as “a teacher, a healer, a prophet and a mystic.”

Strohmier’s “non-church” life experience included founding the Thetford Parish Players, a community theater in Vermont that recently celebrated its 30th anniversary; working as manager with The Big Apple Circus; serving as production coordinator with the Vivian Beaumont Theatre; and working as a script writer with Jon Bankert.

## Witness releases statement on war

In the war in Iraq we see “the exploitation of the myth of redemptive violence,” a March 25 statement by *The Witness* in response to the war declared. “The U.S. government unleashes righteous war and violence in order to rid the world of the threat of war and violence.”

The statement — prefaced with words from William Stringfellow rejecting “the claim of a nation, ideology or other principality” to rule history and to give moral significance to human life — offered five Christian responses to the war: rejecting demonization of the enemy and religious prejudice; calling our nation to turn from violence; assisting victims of war and opposing the use of especially destructive weapons; supporting nonviolent resistance, including civil disobedience; and calling for just and equitable relationships between individuals, communities and nations. ●

For the complete text of this statement (along with an interfaith statement on the war also endorsed by *The Witness*), see our website, [www.thewitness.org](http://www.thewitness.org).



# Commentaries

when it is combined with the reality of peopled lands, and the truth that other people occupy almost all land that is desirable for immigration, we come upon the murky history of colonialism, the missionary movement, imperialism and globalization. Our isolationist nation resists all of those words as too big or complicated — it is the rhetoric of the left. The truth is that these large abstract ideas are foundational to our American Christian identity. They create the story we tell about who we are and how we understand God at work in our lives.

As our nation wages a war with Iraq, remains on the ground in a slightly re-ordered Afghanistan and considers an armed response to North Korea; as we face the overwhelming plight of AIDS in Africa and all the issues facing our own communities; we may not seem to have the time or energy to re-engage Palestine and Israel. After all, being called unpatriotic is bad enough, but being accused of anti-Jewish prejudice is intolerable. (Our church is not free from the legacy of anti-Jewish prejudice, and I write with that caution in mind.)

The Israeli government is building a wall eight meters high and one-to-two meters thick to divide Israel from the occupied territories, which will further prevent the free movement of Palestinians throughout their own lands and into Israel. The effect is like that of ghettos or reservations. We in the U.S. have just watched a wall come down. No longer is our nation just afraid of a bomb from overhead, but now we are afraid of our neighbors. No wall or piece of duct tape will seal us off from the effects of the violence being done on our behalf.

Our government and U.S.-based charities donate billions of dollars each year toward the Israeli government's chosen policy of defense. Without the U.S. government's financial support, Israel could not maintain the occupation. Israel/Palestine is not far away. It is our story, too.

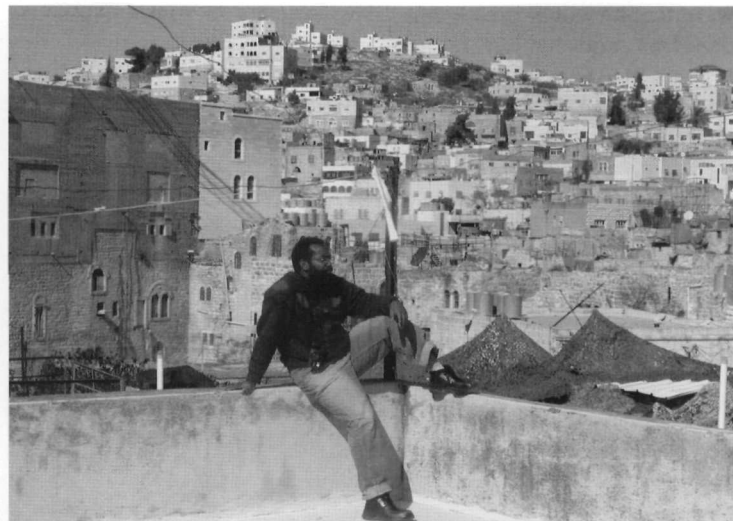
[Ed. note: Winnie Varghese and Michael Battle participated in an inter-faith peace-building delegation to the Middle East in Jan./Feb. 2003, co-sponsored by The Witness. An Episcopal statement concerning the delegation's findings is available at [www.thewitness.org](http://www.thewitness.org).]

## Creative solidarity

by Michael Battle

THE BEST EXPRESSION OF SOLIDARITY is through being present with the other. To show solidarity with Palestinians who nonviolently resist occupation, and with Israelis who seek a homeland without the victimization of any persons, requires creative presence.

It only takes common sense to realize the truth of Mahatma



Michael Battle sits on the edge of a rooftop in downtown Hebron, surveying a silent city suffering its 81st consecutive day under curfew.

Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, axiom that an eye for an eye leaves us all blind. When we become present to Palestinians and Israelis alike who advocate a just peace in the Middle East, we participate in the theological notion that we are all God's children. By understanding the other as a child of God, we no longer understand otherness; rather we are creating relatedness.

The Dalai Lama states, "We have seen many times that today's enemies are often tomorrow's allies, a clear indication that things are relative and very interrelated and interdependent. Our survival, our success, our progress, is very much related to others' well-being. Therefore, we as well as our enemies are still very much interdependent. Whether we regard them as economic, ideological or political enemies makes no difference to this. Their destruction has a destructive effect upon us."

Now, our interrelatedness to Palestinians and Israelis as children of God inspires us to end the main causes of the conflict — the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel and the tragedy of "suicide bombings" by Palestinians. Israeli control cripples the economy and destroys the social fabric. The desperate attempts of "suicide bombers" only increase a vicious frenzy of military control.

Legitimate questions must be asked at this point. How can I realistically show creative solidarity for a people so far away? Why in the world do you think I am related to "those people" over there?" The short answer is to join a Middle East peace delegation such as those offered by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. By going there you do two things: First, you lessen the spiritual distance; and second, you begin to see persons instead of statistics or TV images. To go there and see for yourself transforms the stranger into a relative, which is



the ultimate form of solidarity.

Of course, travel to the Middle East may be unrealistic. So creative forms of solidarity from afar would include supporting Palestinian and Israeli nonviolence initiatives. That support could be financial, or hosting educational events, or doing advocacy with your elected representatives. Another creative form of solidarity would be to pressure corporations that do business in the Middle East to use their financial power to help change the situation.

An interesting example of creative solidarity I would highlight is Ta'ayush (translated from Arabic as "Living Together" or "Life in Common"), an Arab-Jewish Israeli organization. One of our peace delegation members, Jennifer Kuiper from Oakland, Calif., wrote us on March 2: "Ta'ayush led our international group of 17 peace workers to the [villages of Twena and Susiya] in order to determine how we could work together in offering protection to villagers from the increasing frequency and intensity of weekend settler attacks. We decided to develop a rotating schedule of four internationals to sleep and 'live' in the village each weekend, hoping to deter or at least document the incidents."

By supporting creative groups like Ta'ayush, we, too, can learn to sleep and live in a village, one inclusive of all persons, regardless of race, religion, nationality, or any other kind of particularity. On that day in which we learn to be such a family, no longer will difference keep us apart; it will instead be our creative source of solidarity as children of God.

## Ending the inevitability of suicide bombing

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

WILLIAM BLAKE ONCE REMARKED, "I was born in 1757 and have died many times since." I too have died many times since my birth into this world: deaths of being abused or abandoned by someone I loved, deaths of bereavement or humiliation, deaths of knowing there were people who believed me worthy of execution. Fortunately for me, as for Blake, each of those deaths brought with it a resurrection into a quality of life that would not have been possible without the extreme experience that accompanied it.

In my work with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, I am often privileged to witness some of those resurrections. On my desk is a recent letter from a lesbian friend who writes, "I am glad to be coming alive, [overcoming] the fragmentation and disconnection that has kept me unalive." She quotes Sam Keen: "The transformation that takes place when numbness is replaced by a capacity to feel ... is momentous. ... The inspired or resurrected body begins to resemble a tuning fork more than a guarded fortress."

Yes! Coming alive can be difficult, but it is very, very sweet.

How then to understand the willingness, even the eagerness, of many Middle Eastern people literally to fling their lives away on suicide missions designed to take with them people they don't even know? Clearly they are seeking eternal reward as martyrs for their cause. Pondering those suicide/martyrdom missions, I have often thought about John Milton's play *Samson Agonistes*, which raises the issue of whether Samson's tearing down a huge pillared edifice, killing both his Philistine captors and himself, was martyrdom or suicide. I am not the only one to whom this parallel occurred: Since Sept., 11, 2002, the *Times Literary Supplement* has been embroiled in a controversy over an Oxford professor's statement that *Samson Agonistes* should perhaps be banned because there are so many similarities between Samson's death and that of the airplane hijackers.

As a Milton specialist, I despair of those who would ban a classic that is so electrically relevant that it raises all the important contemporary concerns for discussion and clarification. (What's next, banning the Bible?)

To Milton, Samson's death was not suicide but martyrdom because of its inevitability, a word that appears several times. Blinded and chained, Samson's only hope is to tear down the roof over his own head in order to destroy the leaders of the government that has occupied his country and enslaved the people. Even then, Milton is careful to say that only the Philistine leaders perished; the ordinary folks (who lacked the status to get seating inside the building) were spared.

On April 28, 2002, the Neopagan priestess Starhawk posted on the Internet her essay entitled "Heresies in Pursuit of Peace." In it she writes, "Full human beings placed in a situation of utter despair may turn to suicide bombs and retribution. Human beings, humiliated beyond bearing, may turn to revenge. But full human beings are not mindless agents of hate. Given hope and dignity and a future to live for, human beings will tend to choose life."

Here then is the agenda for a genuine war against terrorism: to work toward a world in which nobody is so humiliated, deprived and filled with despair that suicide/martyrdom missions appear to be their only and inevitable recourse. Israelis need their own state, but so do Palestinians. Starhawk suggests standing with Israel's true interests by "demanding an end to the occupation, the dismantling of the settlements, by calling for the intervention of a neutral peace-keeping force and by pressuring the U.S. government to stop covertly supporting and funding Israeli aggression."

So Starhawk suggests, "a flourishing and happy Palestine would be Israel's best security measure, might even become her closest trading partner." Such a Palestine would certainly offer its youth a more promising future than becoming human bombs. And perhaps Israel and Palestine together could teach other governments how to become sensitive tuning forks rather than fearsome fortresses, how to come alive again after so many seasons of numb and wintry death.

# Commentaries

## A martyr's bones

by Robert Hirschfield

THE 13-LINE DISPATCH FROM HONDURAS, appearing in *The New York Times* (1/30/03), stated that remains found in the jungle near the Nicaraguan border may be those of Father James Carney.

One wonders, 20 years after his death, what the remains will say, whose sleep will be thrown into disarray by the silent chatter of bone fragments, if they are, in fact, Carney's bones?

In July of 1983, James Guadalupe Carney, 58-year-old Jesuit from St. Louis, peasant organizer from Honduras, martyr-to-be, crossed over into Honduras with approximately 100 guerrillas led by Jose Maria Reyes Mata. Carney was their chaplain.

Honduras, at the time, hosted a force of U.S. military and CIA personnel, there primarily to train and supply the Contras in their war against the Sandinistas. The Reyes Mata didn't stand a chance. By September, it was wiped out.

Carney was captured in the jungle (his family believes on the third or fourth day of September). The Honduran army claimed it never captured him. It claimed he most likely starved to death in the jungle. John Negroponte, the U.S. ambassador to Honduras, backed the army's claim. But in 1987, death squad deserter Florencio Caballero admitted to Eileen Connolly, Carney's sister, that her brother was brought to the U.S.-run base El Aguacate after his capture and interrogated, then thrown alive from a helicopter. Caballero has since died. Lucas Aguilera, a Honduran Christian Democrat, has since come forward with his own first-hand account. Last year, in a sworn statement to the human rights prosecutor in Tegucigalpa, he testified that he saw Carney at the Nueva Palestina prison, while being held as a subversive. Aguilera, in a conversation with Joe Mulligan, a Nicaraguan based Jesuit and human rights activist in the Carney case, mentioned that the priest looked like he had been tortured.

In his autobiography, *To Be a Revolutionary*, Carney writes that he lived "in a poor *champa* (a shack with a dirt floor) in the village of Camalote." Anonymously. Like the peasants he worked with. Many politically active peasants in Honduras ended up as Carney did. So why, of the many, choose to write about one? And why the one who would choose to disappear into the many?

Because he was irresistibly perverse. Maybe that's why. The recipient of a football scholarship to St. Louis University, educated to be a "Catholic bourgeois gringo," Carney was transformed into a Christian Socialist, into a vision-guided peasant leader who leaped beyond the limitations of his own culture.

In Honduras, he managed to crystallize the limitations of those in power. When the Sisters of Notre Dame wanted to build a swimming pool for the nuns, and not the students, he protested to the sister superior, who said he had no right to stick his nose in her affairs. When his peasant organizing became too much of an irritant, the Honduran government expelled him from the country. When he was

captured in the jungle by the army, he was subjected to the reptilian ceremony of interrogation, torture and annihilation.

This human rights case that has not gone away can stand for all the human rights cases that have.

"If he was captured alive," said Mulligan, "he should have been tried. Extrajudicial killings are in violation of international law."

In Michael Ondaatje's novel, *Anil's Ghost*, the skeleton of one of the disappeared of Sri Lanka becomes the obsession of forensic anthropologist Anil Tissera. She calls him Sailor. She goes about trying to turn a statistic back into a life.

A fungus of silence surrounds the remains of the disappeared in Central America. Political killings are turned into private acts witnessed by birds in flight.

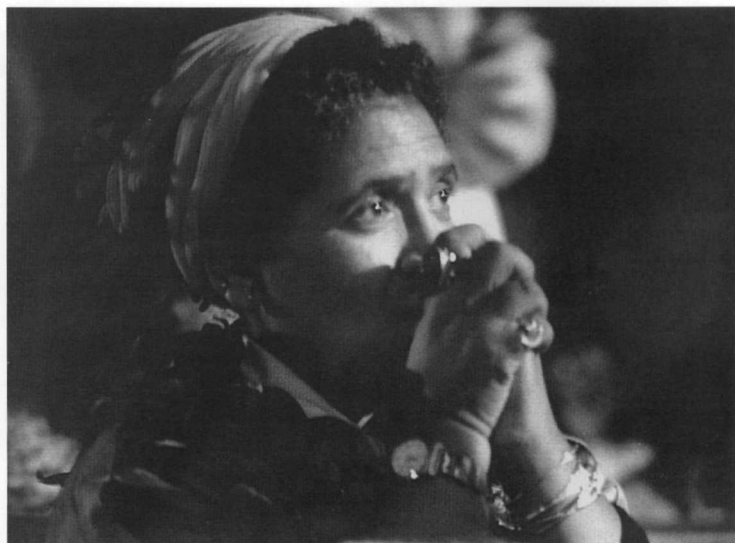
Carney's relatives, along with Mulligan, still demand to know who killed the priest. They want more light shed on the U.S. involvement in the case. Declassified CIA and Pentagon documents have been released, with important information blacked out, buried in the shallow graves of the censors. Twenty years ago is now.

## The Edge of Each Other's Battles: The Vision of Audre Lorde

by Rima Vesely

AUDRE LORDE (1934–1992) has been intrinsically important to the development of second-wave U.S. feminism. She consistently challenged racism, sexism, classism and homophobia, serving as a catalyst for change within and among social movements. Author of 15 books of poetry and prose, she was poet laureate of New York state from 1991–1993.

Warriors battling to claim the authentic fullness of daily life are



jean weisinger

given an inside view into the person and legacy of Lorde in *The Edge of Each Other's Battles*, a recently released documentary produced by Jennifer Abod. The film, which depicts a four-day conference held in 1990, highlights the enduring relevance of Lorde's work in international, feminist, and lesbian/gay movements. At the center of *The Edge of Each Other's Battles* is the complexity of women's relationships with one another, particularly the personal and political dynamics that race, culture, class and sexuality create amongst all women committed to liberation from a patriarchal status quo.

The 60-minute film is meant as a way to use Lorde's work in oppressed communities today. In the 10 years since Lorde's death from cancer, her poetry and prose continue to be a dynamic force in organizing across differences in order to honor the complexity of our individual selves as well as form a united movement in a racist, misogynistic America. The documentary begins by recognizing Lorde's desire that the conference be intentionally focused on bringing together women who were traditionally separated by race, culture, class, nationality and sexuality, to speak to one another about the truth of their lives.

Interspersed with Lorde's words, clips from the conference, and poetry by women attending the conference are interviews with conference organizers whose process of organizing the event revealed just how deeply Lorde's commitment to difference impacted them. White organizers spoke of the need to step back and listen to women of color, and the disappointment they experienced at the failure of various white women to respect the organizers' commitment to a gathering that was 50 percent women of color and low-income women. The event was, for many, an expression of resistance to the middle-class mainstream women's movement, as space was intentionally made for women of color rather than white women to be primary speakers, presenters and voices. Several women of color, through poetry, spoke of being attacked through economic policies made by white men, as well as their ability to claim their persons in a violently racist society.

For those of us who listen to Lorde's challenge as Christians listen to biblical text, the film provided a necessary experience of the intensity of her words. I am now able to read her words and hear her voice, envision her face and body as she was interviewed and speaking on stage. Despite the fact that Lorde's poetry and essays were not quoted in the documentary, the film gives us, in its entirety, a vision of what the world might be if we were to talk about the truth of our lives and express without fear our commitment to freedom. ●

[Ed. note: A longer version of this review appears online at [www.thewitness.org](http://www.thewitness.org). For more information, see [www.jenniferabod.com](http://www.jenniferabod.com)].

## implosions

i blow myself up  
on u

because i want u to understand  
what occupation does  
to hemoglobin:  
transforms it to hemlock.

unwinds its dna double helix  
into the shape  
of my only son's  
perfectly round mouth  
stuck  
in a pose of terror  
watching his father's  
dignity implode.

have u ever seen  
a man collapse  
into  
him  
self?

the eyes fall  
first  
cascading  
beneath  
his epidermis, past  
his cheek and chin  
into his throat  
when he realizes  
he is unable  
to protect his family  
or feed them. or speak.

words are meaningless, when ur eyes  
are lodged  
in ur esophagus.

action  
becomes ur native  
tongue.

next, the left ventricle  
attacks  
the right:  
internal fratricide.

the purest form  
of self-hatred.

finally, the large intestine  
divides  
and tightens into  
4,000,007 military  
square knots, each one  
the size of  
a hand grenade.

i am a walking bomb.

no need for dynamite  
i just meditate  
real hard  
on my history  
since I met u.

concentrate  
on being uprooted  
from my father's father's farm  
and squeezed  
into the gaza strip.

recall  
how u claimed mine  
as urs  
and called me  
a terrorist  
when i fought  
to get mine  
back.

give me liberty  
or join me  
in death.

i blow myself up  
on u.



# S U I C I D E B O M B E R S

## A Palestinian Christian perspective

by Naim Ateek

THE ISSUE of Palestinian suicide bombings has become a familiar topic to many people throughout the world. It is easy for people to either quickly and forthrightly condemn it as a primitive and barbaric form of terrorism against civilians, or condone and support it as a legitimate method of resisting an oppressive Israeli occupation that has trampled Palestinian dignity and brutalized their very existence.

As a Christian, I know that the way of Christ is the way of nonviolence and, therefore, I condemn all forms of violence and terrorism, whether coming from the government of Israel or from militant Palestinian groups. Having said that clearly, it is still important to understand the phenomenon of suicide bombings that tragically arises from the deep misery and torment of many Palestinians. For how else can one explain it? When healthy, beautiful and intelligent young men and women set out to kill and be killed, something is basically wrong in a world that has not heard their anguished cry for justice.

The Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip took a very important turn since the early 1990s. Young Palestinian men, and more lately women, started to strap themselves with explosives, make their way to Israeli Jewish areas and blow themselves up, killing and injuring dozens of people around them. Between the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000 and February 22, 2003, Palestinian militants carried out 69 suicide bombings in the Gaza Strip, the West

Bank including Jerusalem, as well as inside Israel, killing, according to Israeli statistics, 341 Israelis including soldiers, men, women, and children. In the same period, the Israeli army killed 2,106 Palestinians including police, men, women and children.

For the last 35 years, the Palestinians have been engaged in resisting the occupation of their country. For many years they have worked through the international community to bring an end to the Israeli occupation, but they have been unsuccessful.

**For these  
young people,  
daily life has  
become an  
experience of  
death.**

Historically speaking, the Palestinians did not begin their resistance to the occupation with suicide bombings. There were no suicide bombings before the Oslo Peace Process. It is the result of despair and hopelessness that started to set in when an increasing number of Palestinians became frustrated by the deepening Israeli oppression and humiliation.

### **Breeding ground for suicide bombers**

Besides the basic political injustice and the oppressiveness of the occupation, there are four major areas that constitute the breeding ground for suicide bombers. To begin with, many young men have become permanently

unemployed.

Moreover, it is the young men more than others who are humiliated, harassed and provoked by the Israeli soldiers.

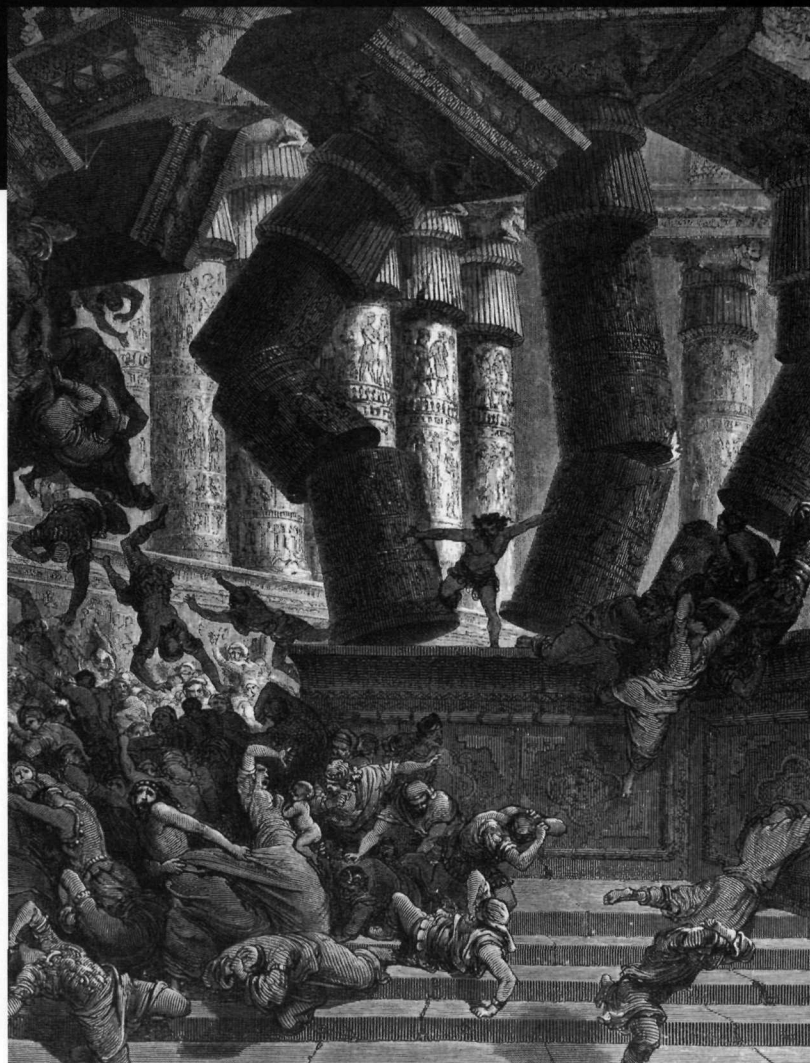
Furthermore, there is hardly any Palestinian family in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that has not experienced some kind of pain or injury. Many families have lost their loved ones. Almost every aspect of Palestinian life is controlled by the Israeli army and many people have lost the ability to dream of a better future or envisage a better life.

There is another group of young Palestinian men and women that must be mentioned. Many of these have been arrested and tortured in Israeli prisons and "concentration" camps. In fact, Israeli prisons have become the "factories" for creating and "manufacturing" collaborators. Young men are detained for indefinite periods of time and are pressured into becoming spies and collaborators. They are simply trapped and some of them do not know how to shake it off. This phenomenon causes some of them to exist in constant self-contempt and scorn for having betrayed their own people. They are ready to become suicide bombers in order to purify and redeem themselves and express their utmost loyalty and patriotism for their country and people.

For these young people, daily life has become an experience of death. Indeed, many of them feel that Israel has practically pronounced a death sentence on them. They feel they have no options and very little to lose. Consequently, they are willing to give themselves up for the cause of God and the homeland (*watan*), believing that with God



Death of Samson.  
Engraving by Gustave Dore  
after Holbein the Younger.



© Hulton Archive / Getty Images

there is so much to gain.

From the perspective of those who believe in and carry out these suicide operations, there is a simple and plain logic. As Israeli soldiers shell and kill Palestinians indiscriminately, Palestinian suicide bombers strap themselves with explosives and kill Israelis indiscriminately.

### Muslim perspectives

The suicide bombings become a more powerful phenomenon when their religious underpinnings are emphasized. It is difficult to determine whether the religious dimension followed and enhanced the political decision for its use or whether the religious significance preceded and prompted it. It is most likely that both went hand in hand, since any Palestinian killed by Israel, whether a militant or an innocent bystander, was regarded as a martyr. Consequently, groups like Hamas were referring to these acts not as suicide bombings but as “martyrdom operations” and “martyrdom weapons.” Nationalism and faith have been fused together and imbued with power. People regarded the suicide bombers as martyrs and believed that paradise awaited them.

Other Muslims argued strongly that Islamic law forbids the killing of non-combatants and, therefore, the killing of innocent Israelis is wrong.

### Effects of suicide bombings

Although Israel was deeply hurt by suicide bombings, the consequences that the extremists were hoping would happen did not take place.

First, Israel had many more options than the Palestinians thought they did. As it turned out, Israel had a good number of military options; and due to its successful media campaign, everything it did was justified as self-defense.

Second, the West Bank is not southern Lebanon. Hizbullah was, indeed, successful in driving the Israeli army from southern Lebanon after 22 years of occupation (May 25, 2000). The West Bank is different. Religious Jewish settlers and right-wing Zionists find strong biblical and historical roots in the West Bank and it will not be easy to evict them from there. The presence of the illegal settlements is one of the most difficult issues in the struggle for peace.

Third, the U.S. is the only great world power today and has an unflinching commitment to the well-being and security of the state of Israel. It will come to its rescue politically, militarily, and economically whenever it is needed.

Fourth, Israel was successful in its media campaign internationally. Many countries in the world are against suicide bombings.

Fifth, the Israeli society did not crumble economically in spite of hardships.

And sixth, the vast majority of the Israeli people, perceiv-

ing the struggle as a fight for the very existence of the state of Israel, supported Sharon and his right-wing policies.

### **Palestinian condemnation**

Although suicide bombings were condemned by some Palestinians, including the Palestinian Authority, they were accepted popularly by many as a way of avenging the Israeli army's daily killings of resistance fighters and innocent Palestinians. And while the American government rushed to condemn suicide bombings and expected the same from the Palestinian Authority, Israel's killing of Palestinian leaders and ordinary civilians did not abate and was not condemned publicly by the U.S.

Be that as it may, it is important to reiterate clearly that the Palestinian community is not totally in support of the suicide bombings. On Wednesday, June 16, 2002, 58 Palestinian men and women, Muslims and Christians, among whom are well-known personalities, signed a public statement published by the most read Arabic daily, *Al-Quds*, asking for a halt to all suicide bombings. They made it clear that such operations only widen and deepen the hate and resentment between Palestinians and Israelis. They also destroy the possibility for the two peoples to live in two states side by side. The statement mentioned that the suicide bombings are counterproductive and will not lead to the fulfillment of the Palestinian national aspirations. They only allow Israel to justify its increasing vicious attacks on Palestinian towns and villages. The statement was published in the paper on five consecutive days before it was transferred to the website with hundreds more signatories.

### **Israeli reaction**

There were voices inside Israel that were calling for more drastic and severe measures to curb the suicide bombings. One of those was Gideon Ezra, the deputy public security minister who openly on television on August 19, 2001, called on his government to execute the families of Palestinian suicide bombers. He argued that if potential suicide bombers know that their families will be

wiped out then they will refrain from committing the act. Apparently, Ezra was basing his suggestion on a Nazi practice that used to arrest and inflict suffering on the families of those who were suspected of undermining the state. Shockingly, Ezra's words did not draw any protest or criticism from the Israeli government.

By contrast, there are courageous voices that called on their Israeli government to examine its harsh policies against the Palestinians that breed suicide bombings. In one case, Rami and Nurit Elhanan lost their 14-year-old-daughter who was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber in September 1997. In spite of the tragic loss, the parents became actively involved in peacemaking. They blamed the Israeli occupation, saying, "Our daughter was killed because of the terror of Israeli occupation. Every innocent victim from both sides is a victim of the occupation." The couple established the Bereaved Family Forum with Izzat Ghazzawi, a Palestinian whose 16-year-old son Ramy was killed by Israeli troops.

### **Was Samson a suicide bomber?**

In discussing suicide bombings from a religious perspective, it is worthwhile to reflect on the story of Samson in the book of Judges (13–16). It is a story of a strong young man who rose up to save his people who were oppressed by the coastal powerful neighbor, the Philistines. Obviously, from the perspective of the Israelites he was regarded as a hero and a freedom fighter while from the perspective of the people of power, namely the Philistines, he was, in today's language, a terrorist.

According to the story, Samson was very successful in his brave adventures against his enemies. Eventually, he was captured by the Philistines and tortured. They pulled out his eyes and kept him in jail. In order to celebrate their victory over their archenemy, Samson, the Philistines brought him to a big event attended by 3,000 men and women, including their five kings. His final act of revenge took place when he pushed the two main columns of the building and pulled it down, killing himself and all the attendees.

Samson's final prayer seems very similar to the prayer of a suicide bomber before he blows himself up. "Lord God, remember me and strengthen me only this once, O God, so that with this one act of revenge I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes."

Read in the light of today's suicide bombers, how do we evaluate the story of Samson? Was not Samson a suicide bomber? Was he acting on behalf of the God of justice who wills the liberation of the oppressed? Was God pleased with the death of thousands of men and women of the Philistines? Is it legitimate to tell the story today by substituting the name Ahmad for Samson? Is the dynamic under which God operates that of Jew versus other people or is it that of oppressor versus oppressed? Is the story of Samson legitimate because it is written in the Bible while the story of Ahmad is rejected because it is not and therefore he is condemned as a terrorist? Do we have the courage to condone both as acts of bravery and liberation or condemn both as acts of violence and terror? Or do we hold a theology of a biased God who only stands with Israel whether right or wrong?

### **Why we condemn suicide bombings**

Although some people in our Palestinian community admire the sacrifice of the suicide bombers and although we understand its deeper motivation and background, we condemn it from both our position of faith as well as a legitimate method for resisting the occupation.

First, we condemn suicide bombings because they are a crime against God. Ultimately, it is only God our creator who gives us life and who can take it. Those who love God do not kill themselves. Moreover, those who love God do not kill themselves for the sake of God. Indeed, they should be ready to die and even be killed for God's sake, but they will not do it themselves.

Second, we condemn it because we believe that we must refrain from inflicting suffering or death on others. From a Christian point of view, the tragedy lies in the fact that these young men and women do not only kill themselves, they cause the death of others,

many of whom are civilians and innocent. We must hasten to add that we equally condemn the state of Israel's killing of Palestinians. Indeed, it constitutes the underlying cause of the conflict. Be that as it may, from our position of faith we say that even when the cause for which a person kills himself/herself is noble, as it is in the case of Palestine, nothing justifies the killing of innocent people. Christ accepted suffering on himself and did not inflict it on others. In fact, from a New Testament perspective, when Christians suffer, it should make them more compassionate for the suffering of others rather than bitter and vengeful. In the struggle for civil rights in the U.S., Martin Luther King, Jr., recognized the heavy price that needs to be paid for freedom but refused to accept any violent method to achieve it. He said, "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood." King insisted on the teaching of Jesus and Gandhi that unearned suffering is redemptive. Furthermore, for the Christian, suffering endured can serve as evidence of Christ's victory over suffering and death. It can also be a way of exposing the evil and the injustice that must be resisted.

Third, we condemn it because we believe that when we are confronted by injustice and evil, we must resist it without using its evil methods. We bear it but do not accept, submit or succumb to it. Some Christians have developed nonviolent direct action as a method of resisting unjust governments and systems. Martin Luther King, Jr., expressed it well when he wrote: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it."

It is our faithfulness to God that drives us to work for justice and for the ending of the occupation of Palestine. But it must be carried out through nonviolence, no matter how long it takes. It is only nonviolence that can guarantee the restoration of the humanity of both sides when the conflict is over. Moreover, nonviolent resistance contributes to a speedier process of reconciliation and healing because it does not violate human dignity.

Fourth, for the Christian, the supreme example is Christ. "When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23). This is not passive resignation. It is total surrender to the God of justice who established this world on justice and who is going to make sure that injustice does not have the last word.

We condemn suicide bombings because they are trapped with the same violent logic exercised and perpetrated by the Israeli government. It is based on the law of revenge expressed in "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Although it is very difficult for us as humans, we are still encouraged as Christians to seek a higher law.

**'The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.'**

Fifth, it is probable that Prime Minister Sharon (and the right-wing religious extremist ministers and settlers around him, including some Christian Zionists) believes that the war against the Palestinians can be justified biblically because he is doing exactly what Joshua did in the Old Testament. Therefore, as Joshua's actions (Joshua 1-11) pleased God so must Sharon's actions. Similarly, the suicide bombers believe that by blowing themselves up and killing those around them they are fighting in the cause of God by ridding their land of the injustice inflicted on it by "infidels," and so earning for themselves a place in paradise.

Our basic problem with both lies in their concept of God. We reject any understanding of God that reflects war, violence or ter-

rorism. God is a God of justice, but God's justice is not expressed in violence or in terrorizing people. God's justice is expressed supremely in love, peace and forgiveness.

Sixth, in the midst of the injustice, suffering and death inflicted on us, we believe that God in Christ is there with us. Christ is not in the tanks and jet fighters, fighting on the side of the oppressors (although many Jewish and Christian Zionists believe that). God is in the city of Gaza, in the Jenin camp and in the old city of Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem suffering with the oppressed. God has not abandoned us. We reject suicide bombings because, from a Christian perspective, they reflect feelings of total despair and hopelessness.

Seventh, we condemn suicide bombings because they practice, in essence, collective punishment against people, many of whom are civilians. They are guilty of the very things Palestinians detest in the Israeli government. When suicide bombers commit collective punishment, they become what they loathe. When the Israeli army incarcerates whole towns for long periods of time or a suicide bomber blows himself up in a market place and indiscriminate killing ensues, both are collective punishment directed at largely innocent people.

Eighth, although people may be ready to die for their faith or even for their country, they need to do everything they can to stay alive and witness in life rather than kill themselves. So long as they are alive, they have the opportunity to witness to the truth. Indeed, they need to remain faithful until death but they must not give up on life and kill themselves. We reject suicide bombings because we believe in life before death as well as life after death. In spite of the despairing situation, these young men and women deserve to live.

There cannot be room for hate if we want to live together. And live together we must. Ending the occupation will certainly end the suicide bombings. All peace-loving people, whether people of faith or not, must exert greater concerted effort to work for the ending of the occupation. ●



# DYING FOR CHANGE

## Self-sacrifice in nonviolent action

by Marianne Arbogast

**S**HORTLY AFTER SEPT. 11, 2001, political satirist Bill Maher outraged sponsors and got his ABC talk show, "Politically Incorrect," cancelled by agreeing with a guest's observation that people who are willing to die for their cause cannot be called cowards. Rather, lobbing missiles from a safe distance is cowardly, Maher suggested. In the storm of patriotic controversy that followed, much of the anger seemed to focus on the idea that there could be any comparison between the suicide attacks and U.S. military action. But whatever distinctions may exist between terrorism and legitimate armed struggle (and these seem harder to draw as modern warfare blurs the distinction between civilian and military targets), or between different contexts in which suicide bombing missions have been carried out (Hamas is not Al-Qaeda), it seems hard to deny that the willingness to lay down one's life for God, country or political convictions has significance.

This willingness — taken for granted in armed conflict — has also been honored by those who embrace nonviolence. The history of nonviolent movements includes many who knowingly risked their lives, such as U.S. civil rights workers who faced brutal assault and, in some cases, death. It includes leaders who, like Martin Luther King, Jr., were acutely aware of the likelihood of their own martyrdom. It also includes a number of "suicide resisters" who have taken their own lives and generated their own controversy.

### Self-immolation

The majority of nonviolent activists — especially those with roots in Christian faith —

would condemn self-inflicted violence as well as violence directed toward others. Yet there have been some who, while rejecting any act that would take others' lives, have accepted the deliberate ending of one's own life for the sake of a cause. The classic modern example of self-inflicted martyrdom is the self-immolation of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, on June 11, 1963 — an act which, according to University of Illinois sociologist Michael Biggs, brought self-immolation into "the global repertoire of protest." (Biggs is the author of "Dying without Killing: Protest by Self-Immolation," a chapter of a book on suicide missions edited by Diego Gambetta, now under consideration by Oxford University Press). Quang Duc set himself on fire at a busy intersection in Saigon to protest the U.S.-backed Diem government's repression of Buddhists.

"The impact of Thich Quang Duc's fiery death was immense and immediate," Biggs writes. "Within Vietnam, it galvanized popular discontent in the cities. ... Four monks and a nun burned themselves to death before Diem was toppled by a coup at the beginning of November. This did not end self-immolation. ... Many more were to die in 1966, protesting against the American-backed military regime and the war destroying their country."

Several Americans — including two Quakers and a member of the Catholic Worker movement — also immolated themselves during the Vietnam war years.

While American peace movement leaders spoke out forcefully against self-immolation, Vietnamese Buddhist leaders praised it. In a 1965 open letter to Martin Luther King,

Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh declared that "this is not suicide."

"What the monks said in the letters they left before burning themselves aimed only at alarming, at moving the hearts of the oppressors, and at calling the attention of the world to the suffering endured then by the Vietnamese," he wrote. "To burn oneself by fire is to prove that what one is saying is of the utmost importance. ... The monk who burns himself has lost neither courage nor hope; nor does he desire nonexistence. ... He does not think that he is destroying himself; he believes in the good fruition of his act of self-sacrifice for the sake of others" (Thich Nhat Hanh, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, Hill and Wang, 1967).

Biggs, who defines self-immolation as "an act of public protest, where an individual intentionally kills him or herself — without harming anyone else — on behalf of a collective cause," says that there have been more than a thousand acts of self-immolation worldwide (not all by fire) since 1963. These have included Czechs protesting the 1969 Soviet occupation of their country, Indian citizens protesting a 1990 government proposal for caste-based reallocation of places in universities and government employment, and Kurds protesting Turkey's capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999.

In Biggs' analysis, the core motivations of those who immolate themselves focus on advancing their cause — either by appeal to the perceived oppressor or to public opinion, by inciting other sympathizers to bolder protest, or as a plea for divine intervention. He also notes the role of despair for those who feel that all roads are blocked and, in some cases, a desire to avoid capture or trial.



*Self-immolation of a  
Buddhist monk in  
Saigon in 1963.*



© Hulton Archive / Getty Images

He mentions — though downplays — the possibility of selfish motivations or psychological disturbances. (Biggs relates the findings of a psychiatric study of 22 survivors of self-immolation in India, which noted “manifest psychopathology” in only one of the cases.)

Biggs says that while “most acts of self-immolation fail to generate any collective response,” there are some, like Quang Duc’s, which have “brought thousands or tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people together — to express their rage, grief and commitment.” Even today, he reports, a memorial on the spot where Quang Duc died is always adorned with flowers.

### **Fasts and hunger strikes**

Biggs distinguishes self-immolation from hunger strikes on the basis that,

for hunger strikers, death is not intended. In fact, he says, hunger strikers rarely starve to death.

A well-known exception was the 1981 hunger strike of 10 Irish Republican prisoners, who died protesting the British government’s denial of political prisoner status. More recently, 12 Kurdish prisoners died in a 1996 hunger strike for more humane conditions in Turkish prisons.

Many hunger strikers have not been committed to nonviolence, except as a temporary tactic. But fasts — of varying lengths and degrees of intensity — have been a traditional practice of many non-violent leaders. Both Mohandas Gandhi and Cesar Chavez fasted in appeals to their supporters for adherence to nonviolent means of struggle, as well as in appeals to their opponents. Washington, D.C., anti-homelessness activist Mitch

Snyder fasted for 51 days in 1984 to pressure the federal government to fund renovation of a shelter. (The outcome was successful, but Snyder committed suicide several years later.) Activist Dick Gregory undertook frequent fasts, and served as advisor to a group of protesters who began an open-ended fast in 1972 to draw attention to American involvement in Vietnam.

“At the time, American soldiers were no longer dying in large numbers, but there was a lot of bombing going on,” says Tom Lumpkin, a Detroit Catholic priest who was one of the fasters. “We wanted to make the suffering visible here in the U.S.”

Participants in the fast believed they might die, Lumpkin says, but they eventually decided to stop fasting after 40 days, seeing a ray of hope in the Democratic presidential nomination of anti-

## Risking proactive nonviolence



In the third week of March, as UN representatives, embassy personnel and others were pulling out of Iraq in anticipation of the U.S. attack, Jerry and Sis Levin, Episcopalians from Birmingham, Ala., were travelling in the opposite direc-

tion. As part of a delegation to Iraq sponsored by Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), they expected to visit schools and hospitals, meet with representatives of various agencies, and help document the effects of war on the Iraqi people.

Preparing to leave, Jerry Levin acknowledged that their plans might well be disrupted by the U.S. invasion. They might or might not be able to return home in two weeks. They might not return home at all.

For the Levins, the journey was a natural outgrowth of a commitment that began in 1983, when Jerry Levin — then a broadcast journalist who had just been named CNN bureau chief in Beirut, Lebanon — was taken hostage by Hizballah militants and held for nearly a year. During that time, his wife, Sis Levin, engaged in a process of investigation and dialogue on the roots of the conflict that eventually led to a meeting with the foreign minister of Syria, shortly after which Jerry Levin was allowed to escape.

Levin, who entered captivity an atheist, came out a Christian with a strong belief in nonviolence. The experience convinced him of the “futility of violence — not just the violence of the so-called bad guys, but the violence of the so-called good guys, too. That’s how I understand the meaning of the gospel, and especially the Sermon on the Mount.”

The Levins interrupted a two-year CPT commitment in Israel/Palestine to respond to CPT’s call for experienced Middle East volunteers to join the March delegation.

In Israel, Sis Levin, who holds a doctorate in education with an emphasis on teaching peace, has been working on curriculum development at the Mar Elias Institute in Galilee, a school that teaches Jewish, Muslim and Christian students together. Jerry Levin has been working with CPT in Hebron.

“We’re a violence-reduction organization — our slogan is ‘Getting in the Way,’” he explains. “We’re constantly doing two things: documenting the excesses of the occupation and its effects, and also going to where the problem of harassment and violence against the Palestinians is at its worst and trying to help relieve that problem, challenging soldiers when what they are doing is out of line.”

In the process, he has been punched, kicked, spit upon, stoned, shot at and chased by an army tank. When he focuses on risk reduction, however, it’s in a much larger context than personal safety.

“We have procedures, as best we can, even under the most difficult circumstances, to try to stop and look at what we’re doing — if it’s right, if it’s effective,” he says. “One of the questions, when we go into a potentially violent situation, is will we, by our presence, make the situation worse or better? How does one approach an Israeli soldier or settler at a volatile time in such a way that it doesn’t inflame them more?”

Levin is uncompromising in his condemnation of all violence, whatever its source.

“When our people drop bombs that kill civilians in Afghanistan and in Iraq, naturally we won’t call it terrorism,” he says. “I am so weary of all the rationales we officially put out for doing the terribly violent acts we’ve done fulfilling our obvious national ambition to dominate the world. It’s interesting that we call it fanaticism on the part of Palestinians when these kids are willing to blow themselves up, but we don’t call it fanaticism when our own soldiers are willing to go into battle and take the chance of getting killed, too.”

What of the risks he takes in attempting to prevent violence?

“I do it because of the conversion process I went through in Lebanon,” he says. “Sis and I passionately believe that the times do not call out for any more Christian soldiers. Instead the times cry out for Christian peacemakers, who are willing to risk proactive nonviolence.”

—M.A.

war candidate George McGovern.

### Peace teams

While most nonviolent resisters in the U.S. have measured risk in terms of jail time, loss of property or personal inconvenience, a new form of nonviolent action has emerged in recent years which clearly involves the risk of life. Beginning with delegations to Central America in the early 1980s and continuing today with peace teams in Iraq and Israel/Palestine, Americans and others have travelled to war zones, particularly those in which there is some U.S. involvement, with the goal of nonviolent witness and solidarity.

On March 16 of this year, Rachel Corrie, a student from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., was crushed to death by an Israeli army bulldozer in Gaza as she stood in its path, attempting to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home. Corrie was a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a Palestinian-led project which invites international volunteers to join in nonviolent direct action challenging the Israeli occupation.

Corrie was “the first International Solidarity Movement volunteer to be killed in this intifada,” an ISM press release stated. “The rationale of international protection rests upon the assumption that Israel cannot remain unaccountable for the killing of international civilians as it is unaccountable for the killing of Palestinians. Today this assumption has been challenged.”

Corrie’s letters home expressed her conviction that, as an American, she was far safer than the Palestinians with whom she engaged in nonviolent resistance. But peace team volunteers have never assumed immunity.

In a 1984 speech to the Mennonite World Conference which laid the foundation for the creation of Christian Peacemaker Teams, Mennonite theologian Ron Sider declared that “we need to prepare to die by the thousands” in nonviolent conflict intervention.

“What would happen if we in the Christian church developed a new nonviolent peacekeeping force of 100,000 persons ready to move into violent conflicts and stand peacefully between warring parties in Central America, Northern Ireland, Poland, Southern Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan?” Sider asked. “Everyone assumes that for the sake of peace it is moral and just for soldiers to get killed by the hundreds of thousands, even millions. Do we not have as much courage and faith as soldiers?”

Although a force of 100,000 has yet to be marshalled, many peace teams under a variety of auspices have engaged in impressive violence-reduction projects around the globe. This past November, 110 delegates from 47 countries met in New Delhi to launch what is perhaps the most ambitious such project yet, establishing an International Peace Force

to intervene nonviolently in conflict areas around the globe.

"The intention is to form a nonviolent standing army, which was the vision of Gandhi," says Janet Chisholm, vice chair of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, who participated in the gathering. Plans call for the initial recruitment of 200 full-time salaried peace workers, whose numbers would grow to 2,000 within 10 years, with volunteer reservists augmenting their forces. Sri Lanka — which has suffered recurrent conflict between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus — has been selected as the site of a pilot project to begin in June. The peace force will "attempt to create a safe space so that people will feel they can begin to have elections," Chisholm says. "There is going to be land reform, and that could evolve into great conflict. It is a time when the different parties in Sri Lanka may be able to develop a peaceful way of co-existing."

This past year, the risk involved in the work of peace teams has perhaps loomed larger than ever, as peacemakers have travelled to Iraq.

A February journal entry by Elizabeth Roberts, a member of an Iraq Peace Team (IPT) delegation sponsored by Voices in the Wilderness ([www.iraqpeaceteam.org](http://www.iraqpeaceteam.org)), reflected on questions delegates were asked to consider. The first was, "In the event of your death, do you agree to your body not being returned to your own country but being disposed of in the most convenient way?" The second inquired if they had written a letter that could be sent to their loved ones in such an event.

"Some people here say the survival odds given to the American peaceworkers staying through the invasion is about 30 percent," Roberts wrote. A core of peace team members is committed to remaining in Iraq for the duration of the crisis.

Yet, although they have considered funeral arrangements and assembled "crash kits" (bottled water, dried food, flashlight, passport, water purification tablets, ace bandage) for emergency use, IPT volunteers make it clear that they do not wish to die. They reject the "human shield" label claimed by other peace delegations, saying that they "refuse to

incorporate military language or ideas to describe the peace witness of IPT members."

### Radical freedom

For Christians, the willingness to risk one's life flows from the cross, nonviolent activist and theologian Bill Wylie-Kellermann says.

"The call to discipleship is 'take up your cross and follow me,' which clearly is a question of risk."

Wylie-Kellermann stresses the link between the cross and engaging the powers, describing Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as a freely chosen confrontation that resulted in his death.

"There is certainly an element of choosing his timing, and freedom, but on the other hand it's consequence. It's not suicide because there are all sorts of freedoms at play around it — people and authorities and powers could respond differently to what he's offering walking into town."

The word "sacrament" comes from the Latin word "sacramentum," which was the Roman military oath to Caesar, Wylie-Kellermann says, and the Roman authorities understood the Christian sacraments as signifying an alternative allegiance.

"In baptism you die — it's a baptism into the death of Christ as well as the resurrection, and in many ways it's like the induction and the naming of this freedom. You've already died, you're free to die. It means you're able to go into any situation — you're not only authorized but free."

But there was also a "heresy of seeking martyrdom" in the early church, Wylie-Kellermann says, with some Christians insisting on being put into the arena.

"There's kind of a line between this element of radical freedom, and throwing yourself on the fire or lining up to take your cross. It's the difference between choosing risk within the context of something else — risking in order to serve human life in some way — versus taking a risk for your own justification. It leads toward a kind of idolatry — idolatry of death, I suppose.

"I think of the Buddhists who immolated themselves and the really careful self-purifying preparation they went through, and it really was rooted in compassion and a desire

to light up the history and make visible the suffering of other people for the sake of peace. But I do think it's so easy to mix a fascination with death with an exposure of death, or a kind of despair with an act of ultimate hope, and when you get pushed to that extreme, they're subject to confusion."

In some ways, self-sacrifice in nonviolent action can be compared to a soldier's self-sacrifice, Wylie-Kellermann says.

"The folks who are on the ground in Iraq at the moment have to have dealt with the prospect of their deaths, and made arrangements and said goodbyes, the same ways that soldiers going off to the Middle East are saying goodbyes. There is a kind of analogy between the risk of the cross and the willingness of soldiers to die in battle."

But there is also a fundamental difference, he says — as there is between nonviolent self-sacrifice and the self-sacrifice of a suicide bomber. "There's a similar freedom obviously involved, and the connection of the political powers to that element of risk, but there's an enormous difference between suicide bombing and the nonviolent way of the cross — just like there is between a non-violent army and a military army. There's just a categorical difference between freedom to die in order to kill, and freedom to die in order to offer life or justice or put a choice to people. They are not the same thing." ●

### For More Information on Peace Teams

Iraq Peace Team/Voices in the Wilderness  
[www.iraqpeaceteam.org](http://www.iraqpeaceteam.org)  
773-784-8065 / email [info@vitw.org](mailto:info@vitw.org)

Christian Peacemaker Teams  
[www.prairienet.org/cpt/](http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/)  
Box 6508, Chicago, IL 60680  
773-277-0253 / email [cpt@igc.org](mailto:cpt@igc.org)

Witness for Peace  
[www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org)  
1229 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005  
202-588-1471

Peace Brigades International  
[www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org),  
email [info@peacebrigades.org](mailto:info@peacebrigades.org)

International Nonviolent Peaceforce  
[www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org)



# HIP - HOP MARTYRS

## Youth, violence and transformation

by Pat McCaughan

UNTIL RECENTLY, Luis Garibay spent Monday nights working at Hope in Hollywood where as many as one hundred Los Angeles-area youth aged 12 and older showed up for b-boy/b-girl (“breakdance”) practice sessions and a different kind of church. There, amid the vibe of Run-D.M.C. and other old school break beats, amongst the soul claps and appreciative cheers, the fancy footwork and head spins on a worn gymnasium floor, hearts opened up space for acceptance, relationship and transformation.

### For Garibay, 27, it was payback.

“When I was growing up, there were no jobs, no Hope in Hollywood, nothing to keep young people interested. Nothing,” he declares emphatically. Consequently, by age 7 he had gravitated to living *la vida loca*, the “thug life,” and gangbanging seemed not only acceptable, but normal.

“Everybody fell into it. The homeboys would say, ‘I’ll give you 25 cents or a dollar. When the cops come, just let us know,’ ” he recalled. By age 13, two older brothers had died in gang violence. Garibay escalated to smoking pot, selling PCP. Later, he graduated to guns and jail time.

“It rolled, like a snowball,” says Garibay. “I just rolled into it. I ditched school, I never paid attention. I was too busy thinking, how am I gonna get home, will I get jumped? Sometimes, I thought about going back, learning a little trade, but it never happened. Everything got too busy. But this is different.”

### Globalization of thug life

From Boston to California, programs like Hope in Hollywood and individuals like Garibay strive for a “different” way to stem the sacrifice of young people to gang violence and drugs, the thug life frequently glorified in popular culture.

Few statistics exist to confirm their suspicions that gang activity, which peaked in the 1990s, is on the rise again in large urban areas like Chicago and Los Angeles. They all assert emphatically: There simply aren’t

**‘They have a whole new set of values, a worldview almost like religion in intensity and scope.’**

enough such programs to go around. Funding is scarce, says Jaime Edwards-Acton, the rector of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, which hosted the breakdance program, formally known as the Jubilee Consortium Inc., a West Coast version of the Houston-based Youth Advocates Inc.

This particular Monday night Edwards-Acton, on “cigarette patrol,” wrestles with how to tell b-boys & b-girls the program will fold in a few weeks when funding runs out. Ironically, its insistent priority on developing relationship over traditional services doomed it.

“It’s a hard program to get funding for

because people are so preoccupied with providing services. What we provide is relationship and, through that, transformation.” He says these Monday nights are a way of being church.

“The community gathers,” he said. “It’s a celebration about expression, health, wholeness, fellowship, creativity, music, and then they go out again. I see a lot of parallels with what happens in church. The goal is transformation of young people’s lives.”

Unlike some youth advocates, he believes that instead of popularizing violence, hip hop is a way to reach the African-American and Latino youth likely to become its victims.

But Kenneth Johnson, executive director of Boston’s Ella J. Baker House, calls it “globalization of thug life.”

“Youth violence occurs in the absence of youth development,” says Johnson, who supervises a host of programs from life coaching skills to homework help and job referrals, yearly serving more than 2,500 youth ages 8 to 21, including ex-offenders.

“They have a whole new set of values, a worldview almost like religion in intensity and scope,” says Johnson, a Harvard graduate who left the private sector three years ago for public service. Baker House, founded by the Azusa Christian Community in 1988, was declared a “Boston miracle” for its role in helping decrease homicides and other violent crimes. It was part of a Ten Point Ministry coalition forged by Eugene Rivers that has spread to such cities as Baltimore, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Memphis and Tulsa.



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*A member of the Hip Hop Nation dance troupe breakdances at the Shift party at the Trocadero on Wednesday, August 2, 2000, in Philadelphia.*

Johnson says the advent of thug life was sparked by economic and educational disparity, media images of violence, faltering family structures and the lack of involvement by churches, whose voice is still "silent and ineffectual."

"I have seen 'learning disabled' youth recite with exact precision a very complicated series of misogynist, violent rap lyrics, which tells me their cognition is just fine. It's not Shakespeare, Proverbs, or poems. It's DMX or Tupac."

### **Tupac Shakur: Martyr?**

The late emcee (rap artist) Tupac Shakur is considered to have popularized "Thug Life," the name he gave to a rap group, an album, and later tattooed across his stomach.

Seven years after his 1996 murder, Shakur remains an enigmatic figure, a

larger-than-life cultural icon, considered by some a martyr to societal forces that spawned his lifestyle. His songs, "In the Event of My Demise" and "How Long Will They Mourn Me?" seemed to anticipate Shakur's untimely death at 25.

Still, Internet chat roomers speculate that he is alive. Previously unheard music, a biography, and *Tupac: Resurrection*, a documentary, are all slated for release this year. A museum in suburban Atlanta is under construction as a memorial by his mother, Afeni Shakur, a former member of the Black Panther Party. Nikki Giovanni, a 1970s forebear of hip hop who recorded her poetry, dedicated a poem to Shakur and tattooed "Thug Life" on her forearm. They'd never met but she said "it was a way to say that this young man cannot be forgotten."

Emmy-winning HBO director Lauren Lazin previewed her documentary about Shakur at the Sundance Film Festival and in a March *Rolling Stone* interview said she was motivated by "this welling feeling for Tupac among younger viewers ... identifying with him, feeling connected to his story."

Shakur, in a 1995 *L.A. Times* interview, said he was a revolutionary, not a gangster, but the media did not get "who I am at all. Or maybe they just can't accept it. It doesn't fit into those negative stories they like to write. I'm not down with people who steal and hurt others. I'm just a brother who fights back. I'm an artist," Shakur said.

When asked why his music popularized violence, Shakur replied: "A perfect album talks about the hard stuff and the fun and caring stuff." He characterized

law enforcement, religious and political groups as gangs. "Everybody's got their own little clique and they're all out there gang-banging in their own little way."

Still, Mister Davey D, a San Francisco Bay area deejay and webmaster and friend of Shakur, says that the slain rapper is more a symbol than a martyr.

"People miss him because he kept it real. If he talked about violence, it's because it was real. What about the promoters and the media conglomerates who produce it? The radio stations that decide which music to play on the air? The media glorifies all kinds of violence, including [the TV show] *The Sopranos*," Davey D says. "Why don't they talk about Tupac's social activism?"

Cristina Verán, a New York City journalist, says hip hop inspired her to consider journalism and other creative expression. "It isn't coming from outside. It's not a government or charity program that came and taught kids how to have that voice. It's something that came from within them, something really powerful."

Similarly, hip-hop cultural values extend well beyond media images, to "the concept of making something from nothing," says Verán, a contributor to *Vibe* magazine, the book *Hip Hop Divas*, and *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*, published by Crown Publishing Group.

"What's promoted on television — rappers with yachts and supermodels and platinum jewelry — is a negation of the original aesthetic." That original aesthetic is so exciting for youth in the city because "if you couldn't afford \$300 shoes, you could take an ordinary pair of shoes and paint or do something unique to them that came from your own mind or creativity."

Johnson believes many impressionable youth both identify with and consider Shakur a martyr, an identification that invites desperation and nihilism. "Anecdotally, we hear of an increasing number of attempted suicides by some black and Latino youth, which could represent undiagnosed mental illness, but also may represent this desperation," he says.

### Taking responsibility

Johnson says the violence will stop when everyone — the church, record producers, rappers, individuals — take responsibility.

"Record producers and artists say that hip hop and/or gangster rap is a morally neutral witness or observation of life, that they provide a product people buy, but aren't responsible for how it's used. That's ridiculous. They are amoral in the sense that they want to make money or make believe that there is some positive value to gain from this type of art that often devalues the positive things about black folks," says Johnson. "We all make choices."

"Most poor black youth are not violent," says Johnson. "But the question remains, what is the role of personal responsibility and effort for each of us?"

Unfortunately, socially progressive hip-hop alternatives — which have existed in the culture for a quarter-century — don't garner the same appeal. "Its voice seems inauthentic. They have never been able to match the scope and depth and vigor of the hip-hop gangsta rap thug life worldview which, among other things, is about money, things — less about relationships. It's you and your buddies against the world," Johnson says. "They don't know how to talk with youth in their idiom and be believed."

In Chicago, Dorothy Papachristos, a Loyola University social worker and founder of Communities Dare to Care, believes she's discovered a relevant way to talk with at-risk youth. "It's called mother love," says Papachristos.

Her focus is "to get kids out of gangs, to reconnect them to families, communities and schools," even taking rival gang members, two at a time, into her home, offering structure, love and respect, with just one caveat: They have to share a bedroom.

She estimates thousands of young people have passed through programs she oversees, including basketball camps, mentoring and tutoring staffed by Loyola students, counseling and anger management. But there simply aren't enough programs or funding. "Society's approach is incarceration, zero tolerance, not intervention and prevention,"

she says.

"Our budget?" She laughs. "We get maybe \$10–15,000 through donations. Our average yearly spending is \$75,000, through begging and borrowing." Local churches donate office and program space.

She got involved after gangs torched her Rogers Park family-owned restaurant. "I had to see who they were," says Papachristos. "I found them, and I said, 'Oh my God, they're just children.'"

"You have to have somebody in your life spiritually that keeps you going. They had nobody, except the gangs who give them a sense of family. But they don't realize what they're getting into. The two major things kids in gangs want are structure and love, a place to belong. They aren't stupid; some are very smart. No one's ever taken time to develop them."

She mourns those lost to prison; two were murdered a few months ago. "I tell them, when they're on the street, gangbanging, selling drugs, there are consequences. I haunt them. I yell and scream and take away their drugs. I get involved in their lives. One told me he had a gun in his hand, aimed at a policeman across the street. 'I could have killed him,' he said, 'but I didn't because I knew you'd be disappointed in me.'"

"Another young kid stopped drinking. He said, 'Every time I pick up a bottle of beer, your face is at the bottom.' They fall, I pick them up. No one else has done that for them. They always ask what they can do for me. I say go do it for somebody else."

She, too, thinks rap has detrimental effects. And like Johnson, she believes main-line churches have to change: "Somebody once said that, if every church opened their doors one day a week and did something for kids, we'd have no more gangs."

### 'I want to live'

In 1988, the Dolores Mission in East Los Angeles, with seed money from hip-hop radio station KPWR 106FM, started Homeboy Industries Inc. Its five businesses now employ 70 young men and women, former rival gang members who work side by side.



Operations Director Carolyn Gold said program founder Gregory Boyle sought a new approach after burying nearly 80 young people killed by gang violence. Homeboy Industries does graffiti removal, silk screening, maintenance, recycling and has launched a capital campaign to rebuild a sixth business, a bakery, that was damaged in a fire. Its Jobs for a Future program offers counseling, referral and community service opportunities to more than 600 youth monthly, including ex-offenders and gangbangers.

Gold says the agency is a symbol to the city that its population is worth the effort. "Not all gang members are shooting people or actively hurting others," Gold said. "They want to do something different. Given other opportunities, they would."

"If the prison system did more rehabilitation and training, rather than just sending them back into the same environment with no new skills, they'd be more equipped to be productive when released. And there'd be more money invested in doing what we do."

Money is also on Edwards-Acton's mind at Hope in Hollywood, who hopes "to regroup and begin again."

Bruce Ham, 20, the program's youth advocate, says it was "an acceptable way out" of drugs and depression for him, and for many young people. The Houston-born Ham says the music attracted him; the relationships sustained him. A mentor helped him apply for college, fill out financial aid forms. Now he does likewise, accompanying youth to job interviews, to HIV-tests. One youth's brother died.

"We hung out a lot," says Ham. "One day, he said he'd considered suicide but changed his mind. He thanked me for hanging out with him. 'Now, I want to live,' he said. They come here because they know they're accepted. No matter what they wear or look like."

Garibay also understands relationship and paying it forward.

"I needed help to change my life. My brothers were gang-banging; it was impossible to get out. I thought I was going to die too," he said.

He got help when a neighborhood church sent a member to his school to recruit volunteers to make repairs. Garibay responded; the relationship developed. Later, the church member visited him in jail and offered him a job. Garibay jumped at the chance and has never looked back.

"When you live it, you are blinded by the violence. You can't see beyond it," said Garibay. He participated in a 2002 Diocese of Los Angeles anti-violence initiative called Hands in Healing. It brought youth together with public and private advocates across the country to seek alternatives to violence.

"Now, I can see it," he says. "I never thought I'd get out of the neighborhood. The incredible part of Hands in Healing was that here I was, driving all the way out, across the country. It made a big change in my life."

## Anti-hate efforts blossom after Matthew Shepard's death

WHEN MATTHEW SHEPARD WAS MARTYRED in 1998 in a lonely field in Laramie, Wyo., his death gave anti-gay hate crimes a human face and put the nation on notice that "the war is far from over," says Episcopal priest Malcolm Boyd, an outspoken gay and civil rights activist.

"He humanized the cause of gays ... he made a sacrifice that was totally unjust," said Boyd, poet-in-residence in the Diocese of Los Angeles. "Unfortunately, without the blood of martyrs, maybe there wouldn't be many changes."

Shepard, 21, a University of Wyoming student, was tied to a split-rail fence, beaten, pistol-whipped and left for dead in near freezing temperatures by two men he met in a campus bar. A cyclist who found him 18 hours later at first mistook Shepard for a scarecrow. He died five days afterward without regaining consciousness.

His death rallied the gay community nationally and inspired the rural community of Lander, about 220 miles southeast of Laramie. Located in Fremont County, it borders the Wind River Reservation, where about 36,000 Shoshone and Arapaho live, including Two-Spirit people, a Native American designation for gays.

"When people said, 'We're not like that here,' I replied: 'If we're not like that here, let's prove it,'" said Debra East, director of the Wind River Country Initiative for Youth, an alliance of LGBT and non-LGBT people created in 2000 by United Gays of Wyoming. Prior to that, there was little cross-cultural interaction, barely "a glimmer of understanding of how all those forms of oppression had hurt all of us together and some of us most profoundly," East said.

Later that year, through its coalition-building efforts, the agency helped rally the community against Church of the Creator, a white supremacist organization that moved its headquarters to Lander.

"Together, people are standing up to them," said East. "They are also struggling with the next question — if 'we're not that kind of people,' then what kind of people are we?"

The Initiative offers tools "to figure out how to interrupt those daily times when people say things that are oppressive or hurtful or unaware, to be respectful of all people and yet to allow for change in a positive way. We all know how to be adversarial — the question is, how do we actively engage in building relationships that don't add another stone to the wall that we've taken centuries to build?"

East is headed to Laramie, where she and colleagues Blaire Wetchie and Yolanda Hvizdak will present a workshop at the Shepard Symposium on Social Justice, an annual event sponsored by the Shepard family. "By being present, three gay people who are Shoshone, Arapaho and white, we are showing shared leadership and teamwork. We're trying to break down old constructs by modeling working together."

They also teach prejudice reduction and empowerment skills — ways to listen and inquire by "building on where we're similar, where we're different, how to tell our own stories, express our outrage at particular events, how our lives are affected by sexism, homophobia, classism, racism.

"Ironically, people perceive gay liberation, cross-cultural work as somewhat marginal, when it's central," says East. But she hopes to reach 10 percent of the population within five years, adding, "If we can do the work well here, it will shift thinking outside of our area. Hopefully, it will grow."

— Pat McCaughan

# KEDUSHAT HASHEM

## Sanctifying God's name

by Lynn Gottlieb

### "Has it ever been heard or seen?"

Who can believe what we have witnessed?

Children led to the slaughter.

O Most Highly Exalted

When such things happen

How can you hold your peace?"

*R. David Bar Meshullam from the time of the Crusades (11th century)*

**B**EFORE EMBARKING UPON REFLECTIONS about martyrdom in Jewish life and narrative, I pause to offer the above lamentation for the innocent children who have died upon the violent altars of history. The children mourned in this *Selicha*, or penitential prayer, were killed by the hands of their own fathers to avoid being slaughtered at the last moment by the zealous Christian soldiers of the Crusades. If we could ever count the graves of all the earth's children who suffer our endless wars, perhaps amazed silence would melt our hearts and turn all our efforts toward saving lives. As a mother and rabbi who has shepherded one son and many students through the tender years of their lives, there is little in this world that can justify the death of children. I have stood over open graves and recited burial prayers over children in the presence of their families. The sorrow of this loss runs so deep, nothing can ever heal the wound.

In the legends of Abraham, there is a story about Sarah, mother of Isaac. On that fateful morning when Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac on the altar, Sarah awakes in a panic, calling for her son. In a vision, she sees him bound on the altar, her husband's knife above his tender heart, and she wails to the heavens. Some commentators say her voice is the voice of the angel that cried out, "Abraham, Abraham do not harm your son in any way."

Other commentators say God demanded a sacrifice, and Sarah offered her life in place of her son. The text recounts that upon Abraham's return to the city of Beer Sheva, he learned that Sarah had died. Another interpretation identifies the sound of the shofar we blow on the New Year as the sound of Sarah's voice admonishing us of the potentially brutal side of absolute surrender to what we believe is God's will.

*Kedushat HaShem* is the technical term for sanctifying God's name which, in extreme cases, requires the giving of one's life. *Kedushat HaShem* refers to right action. Behaving well towards others in all the spheres of one's relationships is the way Judaism understands the meaning of holiness and the way to worship God. Every deed one performs can be seen as a positive or negative witness to God's demand for a holy life. Giving witness to God through acts of loving-kindness is the highest religious ideal. Each person is created in the image of God; each person is deserving of love, fairness and dignity, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity. The Talmud regards the saving of one life as equivalent to the saving of the whole world, and the taking of one life equivalent to the destruction of the whole world.

According to Talmudic sources, there are only three situations when one is obligated to take one's own life rather than transgress a commandment. If a persecutor or perpetrator demands that one murder another person, commit sexual violence against another or publicly deny one's faith, one is obligated to surrender one's own life rather than commit murder, sexual violence or idolatry. One cannot kill another in these circumstances to save one's own life. However, in the medieval period of the Crusades and Inquisition, another more moderate stance developed toward the practice of a foreign faith, and persisted through contemporary times. Some rabbinical sages acknowledged the dire need of Spanish and Portuguese Jews to hide the practice of their faith while publicly pretending to be Catholic. Concealing one's identity to save one's life became an accepted practice. Jewish law permits, even requires the breaking of rules for the purpose of saving a life.

Does the sanctification of God's name ever refer to the killing of one's enemy to glorify God? Unfortunately, some voices in our tradition see the killing of others for theological purposes as a legitimate form of Jewish practice. Every faith tradition contains multiple voices that are in struggle to discover God's will in their own particular time. In the Passover Seder, for instance, we initiate our prayers with an invitation to all who are hungry and oppressed to join us in a feast of liberation. On the other hand, the liturgy also contains the phrase: "Pour out your wrath upon the nations that oppress us."

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb (right) stands with members of Women in Black during a vigil in Jerusalem in January 2003.



*The body of 5-month-old Yehuda Shoham, draped in a prayer shawl, is carried by his father in front of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office during a funeral procession in Jerusalem Monday, June 11, 2001.*



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MARTYRDOM

Once we acknowledge the contradictions inherent in these sentiments, we are obligated to choose which parts of our religious traditions we raise up as beacons of God's light in the world and which parts of our tradition we retire to the past.

I believe that Judaism's most Godlike expression is faithfulness to the struggle for justice and peace through methods of compassion and nonviolence. Therefore, I cannot accept the legitimacy of those voices that claim God desires the desecration and murder of other human beings for any purpose.

Jewish voices throughout our generations wrestle with the contradiction inherent in the affirmation of God is love and the claim that God punishes the wicked through acts of vengeance. This contradiction surfaces in the narratives about the tribe known as Amalek. Amalek is mentioned twice in the biblical narratives (Exodus 17:8–16; Deuteronomy 25:17–19) as the tribe that attacked the most vulnerable and weakest members of the people of Israel as they fled slavery. God requires an eternal war with Amalek: to blot out the name of Amalek generation after generation. Later generations had many responses to this *mitzvah*. Some said that the man known as Amalek hated Israel because the patriarchs rejected his mother when she desired to convert. This Midrash (rabbinical commentary) uses the Amalek story to admonish Jews to be hospitable to converts and strangers. Another interpretation declares the war over, since the tribe of Amalek disappeared long ago. Others however, transmute Amalek into the archetypal enemy that seeks to destroy Jewish people in every generation. That is why Baruch Goldstein could enter the tomb of Abraham on the Feast

of Purim, February 1994, and commit mass murder, and why his community could see him as a martyr. Goldstein identified Palestinians with the nation of Amalek and saw the killing of innocent worshippers as an act of God.

Early Hasidic thought evinced another approach. Rather than seeing Amalek as a flesh and blood people living in the external world, one should see Amalek as an inner quality within one's own soul. Amalek is the part of ourselves that causes us to hate others. Amalek is the constellation of fear, ignorance and arrogance that drive us toward acts that hurt others. Blotting out the name of Amalek becomes a spiritual practice focused on our own state of being. The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism, counseled his disciples: When seeing something in another one does not like, find where that place lives inside one's self and work to transform it into a positive spiritual quality.

What does this mean in the face of Israeli occupation of Palestine and the ongoing siege against Palestinians inside Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza? For me personally, it means a continuing

witness before my own community about the nature of our relationship to Palestinians. We are occupiers and oppressors. We have become Amalek. We have displaced millions in our drive for security and nationhood. We are building great walls of separation that are ruining agricultural communities and forcing millions to go hungry. We have supported policies of breaking bones, torture, humiliation and economic deprivation. We have taken away the hopes and dreams of millions and replaced them with hopelessness and despair. This is what we must fearlessly confront in ourselves as we ask how best to give witness to God's presence in the midst of overwhelming tragedy.

The Jewish community in Israel and throughout the world must work toward acknowledging the ways we treat Palestinian youth to seek revenge. We must acknowledge the ways in which we are sacrificing our own children to the god of national expansionism, brutality and dehumanization of our cousins and neighbors. Sanctifying God's name can only be accomplished on the path of compassion, justice and peace. ●



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